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ESTABLISHED 1889

POET LORE

WORLD LITERATURE

AND THE

DRAMA

Alexander Blok

Stanley Kauffman

C. C. H. Williamson

Mildred Boie

Stanton A. Coblentz

Jean Mitchell Lawrence

and others

WINTER, 1938

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POET LORE

A MAGAZINE OF LETTERS

Published Quarterly

Founded in 1889 *by* CHARLOTTE PORTER *and* HELEN A. CLARKE

JOHN HEARD, *Editor*

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VOLUME XLIV NUMBER 1

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POET LORE 8 ARLINGTON STREET BOSTON, U. S. A.

Alexander Blok (1880-1921) was the greatest poet of the Symbolist school in Russia. His drama *The Song of Fate* (written in 1907-09, revised in 1919) is to a certain extent autobiographical, symbolic of the author's personal life as he himself conceived it; of the transformation of an isolated dreamer into an active worker in public affairs. *Hermann*, the hero of the play, is lured from his comfortable retreat by *Faina*, symbolic of the mystic charm of Russia. Abandoned by her in a snowstorm, he will be brought back to the true path by the pedler, symbolic of the Russian people. His faithful wife *Elena* is not made desolate by his desertion of her, for "perfect love casteth out fear." The figure of the "traveling companion" of *Faina* owes something to the personality of Count Witte, (1849-1915), the most prominent statesman of Russia during the closing years of the nineteenth century and the opening years of the twentieth century. A precise interpretation of the drama is unsafe: the work is symbolic, suggestive, not allegorical.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment.

1 John iv. 18.

Russia! Russia!—All within thee is open, desolate and level; nothing fascinates and enchants the eye. Yet what incomprehensible, secret force draws me to thee? Why do I hear echoing unceasingly in mine ears thy mournful song, wafted through all thy length and breadth, from sea to sea? What is in it, in that song? What calls and sobs and grips the heart?—Russia! What dost thou desire of me? What incomprehensible, secret bond exists between us?—What doth this boundless expanse prophesy? Shall there not here, within thee, be born infinite thought, since thou thyself art without end? Shall there not be a hero here, since there is space for him to develop and go his way?

Gogol: *Dead Souls*, Part 1, Chapter 11.

THE SONG OF FATE

By Alexander Blok*

Translated from the Russian by Oleta Joan O'Connor and George Rapall Noyes

Characters

Hermann
Elena, *Hermann's wife*
Hermann's Mother
Hermann's Friend
A Monk
Faïna, *a singer*
Faïna's Traveling Companion
A Pedler
A Crowd *in the "Palace of Culture"*

The action lasts about a year, in our own times—from spring to the promise of a new spring, on the earth still wrapped in snow.

First Picture

Northern April—the Saturday before Palm Sunday

On a hill is the white house of Hermann, *surrounded by a garden just coming into life, under the glow of a spring sunset which covers the entire sky. A large window in* Elena's *room opens on a garden, beneath the dripping eaves. A path slopes from the gate and winds down the hill, amidst the bushes and young birch trees. Other hills, covered with masses of rapidly melting snow, recede in a chain into the distance and disappear in the bald and rusty expanse of moor. There, the earth merges with the cold, bright, clear sky.—Far off, fires are being kindled, a dog's barking is heard, and the occasional twittering of the early birds.*

On the steps of the porch, in front of a large flower bed, over an open book of pictures, Hermann *dozes.* Elena, *all in white, comes out of the door, gazes at* Hermann *for some time, then tenderly takes him by the hand.*

Elena. Awake, Hermann! While you were asleep, a sick man was brought to us.

Hermann (*half in a dream*). Again I have fallen asleep. In the dream, all was white. I saw a great white swan; it was swimming to the other side of the lake, with its breast turned straight towards the sunset . . .

*This play is translated from the text included in Blok's *Collected Works* (Berlin, 1923, vol. 5) which differs considerably from that printed in the *Shipovnik* miscellany (St Petersburg, 1909, vol. 9). The note on the action, however, on the present page, is from the *Shipovnik* text.

ELENA. The sun is setting, and beats upon your eyes; and you are always sleeping, you are always seeing dreams.

HERMANN. All was white, Elena. And you are all in white . . . And how the feathers gleamed on its breast and on its wings . . . .

ELENA. Awake, darling; I am restless, I am oppressed. And a sick man has been brought to us . . .

HERMANN (*awakening*). You say—a sick man? Strange! Why to us? No one ever comes here; the road ends right at our gate

ELENA. He is quite ill; his skin seems transparent; he says nothing . . . He only looked at me with large, mournful eyes. I became terrified, and I awakened you . . .

HERMANN. But why did they bring him here, when there is no road to our house? . . .

ELENA. My darling, I am amazed, astonished, as if something were going to happen . . . Go look at him, Hermann: he is lying in my room on the little couch. Just like an angel with broken wings. . . . .

HERMANN. These dreams continue.

ELENA. Not dreams, Hermann, but reality. That is more terrible than dreams. If only he does not speak! He seemed to have come to call me from life.

HERMANN. You must not think in that way, Elena. Have no fear! But yet I, too, am frightened. When you live in seclusion, the most trivial events seem important . . . Of course nothing has happened, dear. And what can happen?

ELENA Go to him, Hermann. Look at him—and come back to me. But if he starts to talk—do not listen.

HERMANN. You say he is ill? And he is silent? But even if he should speak . . . what news could he tell?

(HERMANN *goes into the house.* ELENA *moves about the flower bed.* A FRIEND *comes in.*)

FRIEND. Good evening. Today your house seems unusually bright. Even from that hill I saw your white gown, and it seemed as if you had great white wings at your shoulders.

ELENA. Today they have brought a sick man to our house. He is very like an angel; and it seemed to me too that he also had great white wings.

FRIEND. How you love fairy tales, you strange woman. Out of the smallest event you make a holiday. And always with such a serious face. Well, I am ready to believe you: this is ludicrous.

ELENA. Everything is always ludicrous to you.

FRIEND. Everything *is* ludicrous. You see I live in time and space, and not on the Isles of the Blessed, as you do. People are so dull that it is better to laugh; otherwise we should come to tears. Only one thing is not ludicrous.

ELENA. What?

FRIEND. You know . . . I love you, Elena.

ELENA. Be silent, be silent. This is not the first time that you have said this, but it is not true. Else—how could you be a friend of Hermann?

FRIEND. But, truly, in your home everything is possible. Neither of you is at all of this world. You are unusual . . .

ELENA. Ludicrous?

FRIEND. I said: unusual. I love Hermann. But yet, in you, Elena, is the whole secret of this house. Without you Hermann would perish. He is an infinitely weak man. Hermann shines with your light. If he should go away from here there would remain of him only darkness . . .

ELENA. Be silent.

FRIEND. I am silent . . . wonderful, extraordinary woman . . . So is it true, that Hermann is going away?

(HERMANN'S MOTHER *comes out on the porch. She is a tall, elderly woman, in a black dress.*)

MOTHER. Elena, the lamp must be lighted in Hermann's room. Today I saw in a dream . . .

ELENA (*not listening*). Hermann? Who told you this?

FRIEND. The thought was my own . . .

ELENA. So that is it . . . Where is Hermann? Why has he been gone so long? Mamma, mamma, where is Hermann?

MOTHER. Hermann is in the house. With the sick man.

ELENA. Is he speaking? . . .

MOTHER. Hermann is silent, and is listening. But the sick man speaks with a feeble, broken voice, one cannot tell what he says.

(*At this moment* HERMANN *leads the sick* MONK *out of the house and carefully seats him on the step of the porch.*)

MONK (*speaking with a feeble voice and smiling gently*). Peace to you and to your house. It is not in vain that I feel better. I asked to be brought to you, because even from afar I saw that your house was bright: brighter than all the others standing on the hills. And is there no one else in this house?

ELENA. There are only three of us: Hermann, mother and I.

MONK. Hermann is beautiful, living in this quiet house with his wife and mother; for his house is bright. But from the distant hill I saw above it great white wings . . .

FRIEND (*to* ELENA). There, he too saw your white wings.

MONK. . . . and thought, that here—was Faïna.

MOTHER. I do not even know such a name.

ELENA. That must be a monk's name?

MONK. Have you never heard of the fair Faïna?

ELENA (*thoughtfully*). Never.

MONK (*with a smile, to everyone*). You know very little. It must be because you live in solitude. The whole world knows Faïna.

HERMANN. A strange name: Faïna. There is something mysterious about it. A dark name.

MONK (*with a smile*). And you, lad, have you never heard about Faïna?

HERMANN. I have not heard.

MONK. Peace to you, Hermann. You will hear soon. The sun is setting, the wind is rising. Let me rest in your house. (*To the* FRIEND, *craftily.*) You will help me, my wise man?

(*The* MOTHER *and the* FRIEND *lead the* MONK *into the house. Dusk.*)

HERMANN. What a day full of fairy tales . . . A continuation of the miraculous dream . . .

ELENA. Of what are you thinking, Hermann?

HERMANN. You spoke the truth: something is surely going to happen. The snow is melting. The wind is warm. During the night there will be pools of water, a dark sky, and incredible, immense stars: you know how it is in spring?

ELENA (*restlessly*). Hermann, you have spoken with him?

HERMANN. He spoke. I only listened. He awakened and tenderly embraced me. And he pointed to the window . . .

ELENA. What is there? . . . In the window? . .

HERMANN. I saw that the snow was vanishing from the hills. I heard how Mother in the adjoining room was reading quietly: "There is no fear in love. Perfect love casteth out fear."

ELENA. My darling! What are you thinking about?

HERMANN. I saw a vast world, Elena: blue, unknown, alluring. The wind broke in through the window—there was a per-

fume of earth and of melting snow. And there seemed, also, a perfume of flowers, although of course, there are no flowers yet. The sun was setting and the hills became red; and behind the hills —blue, misty space, like a great lake extending far away . . . There swam a great white swan, with gleaming feathers . . . with her breast turned straight towards the sunset . . .

ELENA (*joyfully*). My darling! You saw this in the dream!

HERMANN. In a waking dream, Elena. I understood that we were alone, on a blessed isle, apart from the whole world. Is it possible to live in such solitude, and so happily? He was telling me about the wonders of the world. But out there . . . spring had begun . . .

ELENA (*almost weeping*). I hear you, Hermann . . . But I am distressed.

HERMANN. You yourself said: Awaken! So I have awakened. I must go to the people. He ordered me to go. But I shall return soon, Elena.

ELENA. I believe in you. I hear you. Let me weep alone . . . (*Goes into the house.*)

HERMANN (*falling on his knees*). Lord! I can continue thus no more. I am too happy in my quiet white house. Give me the strength to bid farewell to it and to see what life is like in the world. Preserve for me only the ardor of a youthful soul and a living conscience, O Lord! More than that I do not ask of Thee on this bright spring evening, when my thoughts are so calm and clear. I believe that Thou hast heard me. Now—I am at peace.

(*He rises from his knees. The* FRIEND *comes out of the house.*)

FRIEND. So you are going?

HERMANN. How do you know?

FRIEND. That is good, Hermann.

HERMANN. Why do you always try to teach one something? I know things myself.

FRIEND. No, you know little. When we meet—there (*pointing to the theatre*), you will see that I know more than you.— *I* do not like this monk at all.

HERMANN. Why?

FRIEND. He is crafty and sentimental, like all monks. I was ashamed to hear how he mocked at you.

HERMANN. Mocked?

FRIEND. You know who this Faïna is, about whom he was so mysterious to you? No more nor less than a music hall singer with a very doubtful reputation.

HERMANN (*sharply*). I do not know why, only at times I feel a loathing for you, my friend. When one has to decide something important, it is better for friends to give no counsel and to keep at a distance.

FRIEND. Really, how spiteful you are! I did not know. I like that idea, too.

HERMANN. What can you like in it? I think it is not particularly pleasant.

FRIEND. Well, I see that I'm not wanted. I must give you some chance to sentimentalize. Goodbye for the present. (*Goes out.*)

(HERMANN, *deep in thought, wanders about the garden.* ELENA *comes out of the house, all in white, young and radiant.*)

ELENA. Has he gone?

HERMANN. He has. Really, is he not a curious man? (ELENA *is silent.*)

ELENA. So it is decided, Hermann?

HERMANN. It is decided.

ELENA. This is my last word, my darling. Remain with me, if you can and will. (*Suddenly, with a note of prophetic despair in her voice.*) Without you I shall soon grow old. Mother will die. (*Wrings her hands.*) The lily will never grow!

HERMANN. What is the matter, dear? Of course I shall return very soon.

ELENA. See: in my window there is a lamp. In mother's room there is ice on the panes, but over my window—already it is dripping. In your room there are books. Under glass there are orange blossoms . . .

HERMANN. I cannot remain, Elena. You see: spring has begun.

ELENA. I know, Hermann. But I am very unhappy.

HERMANN. I will bring you new tidings.

ELENA. Do you remember: you yourself planted the lily last spring? We carried the manure and the earth and got soiled all over. Then you buried the thick bulb in the blackest earth and laid turf around it. We were gay, strong, happy . . . When you are gone the lily will not grow.

HERMANN. Is the lily dearer to you than my soul? Look up. Do you not understand what is going on?

ELENA. When you speak, I understand all. When you are gone, I shall not understand.

HERMANN. Do you hear how the wind sings? Like—the

Song of Fate itself . . . a merry song. Do you hear? Lord, how painfully and joyfully! But in the house there is no wind, and the Song of Fate is not heard. You have heard that it has been said: "Perfect love casteth out fear"?

ELENA. Yes I know, Mother was reading those words . . .

HERMANN. Mother knows the heart of her son . . .

ELENA (*suddenly, as if awakening*).—No! No! I know the heart of my beloved! And furthermore—I am not afraid! If it be destined, go, my darling, go, my prince! Go thither where sounds the Song of Fate!

(*It has become entirely dark. The* MOTHER *comes out and stops on the dark threshold.*)

MOTHER. My God! My God! Why are you going away, my child? Shall I see you again? Why are you going away? (*She sits down on the threshold. Her face is not visible.*)

ELENA. Here is the lantern. Bright as your heart, Hermann. Darling, go. You will return.

HERMANN. Farewell, Elena. Farewell, Mamma. This is not terrible. I shall return soon. Passing the boundary line is the hardest step. Farewell. In your house the monk remains.

(*He quickly goes to the gate.* ELENA *follows him. The* MOTHER *remains on the threshold—in terrible anguish.*)

ELENA. I shall wait.

(*And suddenly—like a spring thunder shower*—ELENA, *sobbing bitterly, lets her arms fall on* HERMANN'S *shoulders.*)

HERMANN (*agitatedly*). Soon. Soon.

(*She laughs through her tears. He quietly disengages her strong arms. He raises the lantern, and, tossing his head, quickly begins to descend along the path. The pale face of the* MONK *bends forward to the broad pane and looks into the night: for his sick and colorless eyes there seems to be no refuge. The spring wind increases; in the open spaces of the black sky are large, bright stars.* ELENA *quietly goes towards the house. She staggers. Her dress shows white.*)

SECOND PICTURE

The same place—near the house of HERMANN. *Deep night and calm have set in. The barking of the dogs and the twittering of the birds are not heard. The sharp roof of the house is lost in the black sky. Over it clouds are hurrying, frightened by the wind; sometimes covering, sometimes disclosing, the great stars. All is submerged in complete darkness, only* ELENA'S *large window is open.* ELENA *has bent her head over her work, by the lamp, and in*

front of her sits the sick MONK, *gazing at her with great, sad eyes. The whole picture is covered with a fine, bluish, transparent gauze, as if the house and* ELENA *and the* MONK *had gone back into the past.*

ELENA. Speak on, friend. My Hermann is now already on his way.

MONK. It is not easy for me to speak on—the spring is so exhausting. But listen. It was a black spring night. Over the wooded gorge of the broad river rested the glow of bonfires and songs pealed forth. Listen, Elena . . . High up over the gorge stood a stately maiden who was gazing far beyond the river. Like a nun was she, in a black kerchief, and only her eyes shone from under the kerchief. Thus she stood the whole night through and gazed into distant Russia, as if she were awaiting someone. But no one was there, only the flooded meadow, and the withered brush, and the spring wind. But when she looked up, knitted were her angry, black brows, and the pale, half-opened lips asked for something . . . Cover me up, Elena.

ELENA (*throwing a light coverlet over him*). You are raving, good friend.

MONK. Listen, listen further. A monastery stood by the river. And each night she waited on the farther shore. And each night the monks crept to the white wall—to see whether Faïna would wave her fluttering sleeve, or sing, or come down to the river . . .

ELENA (*dropping her work*). Faïna? You are telling me of Faïna! Do not speak of her, do not! . . .

MONK. Do not interrupt me, listen. In the evening, at the village, the soul of Faïna was lashed by drunkenness, and all the old men on their sleeping-shelves knew that she had broken into a dance . . . All the lads from the neighboring villages gathered to see how Faïna danced, with her hands on her hips . . . But languor seized her in the midst of the dance, and, leaving the dancing throng again and again, Faïna would go away to the river gorge; she would stand for a long time and would await someone. And only her eyes shone from under the kerchief . . . ever brighter, ever brighter.

ELENA. I have a strange feeling . . . an uncanny feeling.

MONK. And such grief descended upon me, Elena. And I was in such anguish, I so longed to be a man . . . In the black night I saw a crimson glow above the river. That was the

Old Believers,* burning themselves: the old belief rose as a fiery glow above the earth . . . And in the village of Faïna it became as bright as day. The wind bent the trees, and far and wide the sparks were carried, and the flames played amid the timbers of houses. Out of the bellowing of psalms, out of the red fire—Faïna descended into the blue shore shadow, and I saw how a little lane of blue silver ran after the boat, how Faïna stepped out of the boat beneath the monastery, looked back and ran from her native village into the dark field. Opening a little door in the white wall, I, too, went out into the field. I bowed to the earth before the golden domes of the monastery and wandered into the dark night. Yet I did not find Faïna, and nowhere did the people accept me. Long did I seek, and I began to weaken . .

ELENA. Tell me no more. It is terrifying . . .

(*During the last words, at the foot of the hill, a sort of diffused light begins to wander about, not lighting up the neighborhood.* ELENA *persistently looks through the window. Behind her shoulder is the fixed and sorrowing gaze of the* MONK. *Below appears a little lantern*)

HERMANN (*gropingly seeking the way*). I will not go anywhere. There it is strange and alarming. I have lost my way. Were there not three birches here somewhere? Ah, heart, thou pale lantern! Show me the way!

(*Suddenly he stops, coming to the column of diffused light. Whether it be his fancy or reality, a hardly distinguishable figure leaning against the steep slope of the hill, feebly glimmers: the outlines of a woman luxuriously wrapped in heavy black fabrics, on which are strewn silver stars: on the shoulders and on the breast they are smaller and set more closely together, lower down they are larger; on the long train lies a great diamond star. The face is invisible, except for the enormous sorrowful eyes, which gaze straight forward. Whether it be from the breath of the wind or the trembling of his hands,* HERMANN'S *lantern goes out.*)

HERMANN. Who art thou? Alive? Dead?

APPARITION (*indistinctly, like the wind*). No.

HERMANN. Art thou awaiting some one?

APPARITION. Yes.

HERMANN. I shall go my way.

*The Old Believers, or Raskolniki, were schismatics opposed to the changes introduced in the Russian ritual in the seventeenth century by Nikon. Bands of a certain sect of them used to burn themselves to death.

APPARITION. Go.

(HERMANN *makes a step forward, but an invisible obstacle forces him to draw back.*)

HERMANN. I have lost my way in the garden. My lantern has gone out. (*Looks up.*) It seems to me that I came from over there. (*Points to the distance.*) My house is there. So. I am going my own way.

(*The* APPARITION *slowly leads him away from the hill. He walks gropingly.*)

APPARITION (*scarcely audibly*). Follow me.

(*The light dies away. The* APPARITION *vanishes.*)

VOICE OF HERMANN (*in the darkness*). Here is the road. Glory be to God! It was only a dream. (*His steps become fainter and fainter in the distance.*)

ELENA (*in the window*). Was it a requiem that I heard just now? Or did I merely dream of it? Or was it the wind, friend? Or is it the spring? I feel afraid, as if something had happened to my dear one. Why are you silent?

(*The* MONK *makes no answer. As before, he sits in front of her and sorrowfully gazes through the window.*)

THIRD PICTURE

The city. The seventy-seventh day of the opening of the Universal Industrial Exposition.

The main building of the Exposition is a gigantic hall. Above are round panes of glass, like the eyes of the day, but in the building itself is eternal night. From globes of frosted glass electric light pours out in blinding streams upon high platforms crowded with machines; the steel bodies of the machines suggest, by their forms, some sort of monstrous animals. Here are gathered: locomotives of the latest designs, with driving wheels seven feet across, that seem riveted into the short rails; automobiles with thick tires, sensitive to the slightest shock; motor boats, thrusting their cruel prows far ahead, reminding one of sea birds split in half; agricultural implements with tempered steel points, projecting upwards; and finally, in the very rear of the hall, behind a net of steel rings and uprights, behind a forest of cross beams and projecting levers shines an enormous flying machine, with the unfamiliar light metal of its wings outstretched to the arches of the hall.

Under the shadow of these wings rises a high stage. Above it, high up beneath the dome, amid garlands of fresh flowers and greens, shines a multi-colored inscription: THE PALACE OF CUL-

TURE. *Still higher, with measured swing, moves the pendulum of a clock, which fills half the opening of the dome, and seems to bend attentively over the hall.*

At the opposite end are closed, carved gates, leading to the street; on either side of them are employees in red uniforms, trimmed with gold lace. Farther to the side is the ticket office and the turnstile. At the very entrance is a government notice: between gold coats of arms one can make out the words, "THE TERRITORY OF THE UNIVERSAL EXPOSITION IS INVIOLABLE." *All the walls, pillars and machines are adorned with multi-colored posters with a huge inscription:* "FAÏNA. THE SONG OF FATE."

The crowd is pouring through the turnstile in a dense wave. Among other passers are HERMANN *and his* FRIEND.

NEWSBOYS.

(*A musical gamut.*)

Triumph of human genius!
Latest discovery of science!
Clowns, acrobats, various divertissements!
Inviolability of the territory of the universal
"Palace of Culture" guaranteed by the government!
Seventy-seventh appearance of the famous Faïna!
The famous Faïna will render "The Song of Fate!"
The universally celebrated Faïna!
Faïna, the most beautiful diva in the world!

HERMANN (*looking around; his nostrils dilated*). How did you find out that I was here?

FRIEND. I could not fail to find my best friend . . .

HERMANN. Such noise! Such music! Such wind in this city! From the moment that I left my house, lost my way, and went on, charmed by that strange and sorrowful vision, the wind has not ceased. Is it possible that it is always thus?

FRIEND. The wind is everywhere.

HERMANN. Lord, how fine this is! Everywhere wind! And everywhere such music! If I should become blind, I should hear only this ceaseless uproar. If I should become deaf, I should see only this continuous motley-colored movement!

(*He clenches his fists, and stretches out his arms, like a man who does not know what use to make of the superfluity of his abounding strength.*)

FRIEND. I envy you. It is amusing to see a grown up lad, to whom everything is new.

HERMANN. And so I came into the city square . . .
How smoky was the morning haze about me!
And in the haze a feeble woman's voice
Sang songs of freedom. I could not discern
Whence came that voice, whence came that morning song.
Then I began to gaze around, and raised
Mine eyes on high. And there I saw a window,
Covered with iron bars, set thick and fast:
A prison window. And there gently gazed
Into my eyes—eyes full of a strange calm
And marvelously bright. How sad were they!
Behind those bars a maiden was confined . . .

FRIEND. Yet I supposed, my worthy friend, that you
Had more of wit, of mockery, of wisdom;
That you with irony had journeyed here
To gaze upon the show, not yield yourself
To any silly lyric inspiration.
Recover your sound sense and banish pity.

HERMANN. I did but wish to make you understand
All the mysterious visions of our life:
The story of that beggar, oozing blood,
Who stretched out to me, asking charity,
A shapeless stump, the remnant of his arm;
Or of the boy who fell beneath the wheels
Of a chance cab; or of that noseless hag
Who gazed upon me with a leaden glance
From under bloodshot lids. Such sights we see
On every corner. We cannot escape them.
And yet of pity I have not a trace.
Perchance such pity is what I must learn?

FRIEND. Nay, nay, observe this world and laugh at it!
Rejoice that you are here as a chance guest;
Banish all pity with the scourge of sound
And hearty laughter. If you feel compassion
Because men perish miserably, then I
Myself most scornfully shall laugh at you!

HERMANN. Ah, I too feel that hatred for compassion,
But equally I hate that scornful laugh.
Neither of them is worthy of our life:
If we do naught but pity, life flits past;
If we laugh always, it escapes our grasp.
In laughter and in tears life drags along,

A weak abortion, or a feeble dream.
They are the limp, gray curtain of the stage,
Or are like drunkenness, that hides the living,
The manifold abundance of the world!
I would be sane and sober! You have promised
To show me Culture's gorgeous, ample feast!

FRIEND. Yes, now we find ourselves within the walls
Of Culture's Palace. An inscription, pompous
As that inscription on the dreadful gates
Of Dante's most mysterious Hell, informs
Us of the fact. So let us join the throng
And contemplate human stupidity. (*They mingle with the crowd.*)

CROWD. Quiet! Quiet! The professor is speaking!

(*A rosy-cheeked old man, with spectacles on his long nose, crawls with trembling legs onto the stage.*)

OLD MAN. Gracious ladies . . .

CROWD. Can't hear! Louder!

COCOTTE (*pinching her friend*). He calls me a lady! Ha, ha, ha!

GIRL (*to a* FOREIGNER). If you don't stop, I'll call the police or slap your face . . .

FOREIGNER (*stroking his shaven cheek nonchalantly*). The territory of the Universal Exposition is inviolable . . .

GIRL. Impudence!

OLD MAN (*louder*). My dear sirs. In this main building of the Universal Exposition are gathered all the products of the most modern industrial technique. Your eyes will convince you how tireless is the activity of the human brain . . .

CROWD. Brain! Brain!

OLD MAN. And how great is the power of human genius. . .

CROWD. Genius! Genius! Oh, ho, ho!

OLD MAN. Today for the seventy-seventh time I make my speech on the triumphs of human progress. We scientists may confidently assert that science is the only way by which humanity can overcome the obstacles which nature has placed before it. In the near future, my dear sirs, people will no longer be hampered by distance, for here is the Lowndes automobile, which covers one hundred miles an hour.

(*A representative of the firm comes forward and bows.*)

CROWD. Oh! oh! In one hour!

OLD MAN. You see that knowledge has overcome our belief

in the miraculous. There are no more miracles, gentlemen. You will have nothing to wish for after I acquaint you with the latest great invention . . .

CROWD. Oh, ho, ho! Nothing to wish for!

OLD MAN. Before you is a flying machine possessed of unusual power. This is the last great invention, promising us in the future the possibility of communication with the planets.

CROWD. Oh! oh! With the planets!

OLD MAN. The machine, in order to be of minimum weight, is made of the lightest material. But, my dear sirs, the power of its flying sinews is such that, with its gigantic wings, it can easily crush and devour a man . . .

CROWD. Oh! oh! Devour a man! Oh, oh, ho, ho!

OLD MAN. This very moment, gentlemen, the movement of its wings will be demonstrated.

(*A workman presses an invisible button, and the wings of the flying machine begin to rotate slowly. Deafening applause. The* OLD MAN, *adjusting his spectacles, climbs down. Immediately acrobats and clowns take his place on the stage.*)

CLOWN. Allow me to acquaint you with the latest discovery of science. There are no more miracles, my dear sirs! The force of my seventy-seventh flying slap is such that this man will soar up high and disappear from the horizon of your sight.

(*He gives a resounding slap to a sorrowful man in a black dress coat. The man with no change of expression turns several somersaults in the air and flies head over heels behind the stage. Applause, laughter.*)

HERMANN. Dull men, who seem of no more worth than puppets! These sights amuse me not; they cause me grief . . . Where is the gold, the splendor, and the gleam?

FRIEND. You see the letters shining on the wall: Faïna: she it was who drew this throng.

HERMANN. Faïna? Where then is the divine Faïna?
How many times I have been told of her,
And yet I cannot call up any picture
Of her fair face: a shadow seems to hide
Its features from me . . . Tell me who she is!

FRIEND. A singer who won fame in music halls
And knows how to attract the vulgar throng . . .

(HERMANN *makes an impatient gesture. An* ORATOR *comes on the stage.*)

Orator. Citizens! The territory of the Universal Exposition is free and inviolable! Here, in the kingdom of progress and human genius, I address you, as brothers, with a word about a perishing brother! An hour ago a conspiracy of the greatest importance to the government was revealed. The death sentence has been pronounced upon its leader. But according to the laws of our free land, citizens, every one of us has the right to declare his willingness to be executed instead of the criminal. I appeal, brothers, to your magnanimity! Who among you will give his life for a brother who has been condemned to death?

(*Silence.*)

Fellow-citizens! The issue is not one of life and death! In all probability, the government of our free land will pardon the man who consents nobly to sacrifice his life! It will also pardon the culprit, for whom the self-sacrifice of a brother will be a sufficient penalty.

(*A murmur. Individual exclamations.*)

Citizens, I do not conceal the fact that there is some danger. For our brother has made an attempt against the weal of the state itself.

(*Silence. After waiting a little, the orator descends from the tribune. All turn their backs on him, while he clears a path for himself.*)

Voice of the Cocotte. Why don't you go yourself?

Hermann (*pale*). They will execute him . . . What held me back?

Friend (*laughing in his face*). Curiosity.

Hermann. No! I swear to you, no!

Friend. What is the matter with you? Does it not seem ridiculous to you?

Hermann (*concentrated on himself*). Lord! What? Betrayed? Conscience, conscience . . . (*raising his head*) No! My conscience is clear . . . (*taking himself in hand*) You must show me Faïna. Where is she? I care for nothing else here . . .

Friend. Calm yourself, she will soon appear on the platform. I am suspicious of your interest in her.

Madman (*forcing his way in*). Faïna! Faïna! Faïna is here! She has passed by here.

Crowd. Faïna! Here? Faïna? I didn't see her! Here? (*From the other end of the hall, where the wings of the machine*

are moving, a short cry is heard.) What? What's the matter? A man has been crushed? The machine has crushed a man! (*The medical staff make their way through the crowd.*)

A LADY (*twitching*). How painful that must be! . . .

A GALLANT DOCTOR. Oh, no, madam, not at all: without a trace . . .

(HERMANN, *who has been held back by his* FRIEND, *rushes toward the exit. But already, from the street, first a dull, then a growing, hum and roar are heard. Shouts:* "Faïna! Faïna!" HERMANN *is crushed by the crowd, which recedes and leaves a wide path in the center.*

A ponderous man in a broad hat is now seen in the crowd. This is the gloomy TRAVELING COMPANION *of the singer. He is a head taller than anyone else, walks with a heavy step, and looks only at* Faïna.

Red-uniformed employees fling wide open the gates of the Palace of Culture. There appears an enormous black automobile, adorned with roses. It slowly and noiselessly glides up to the stage. To the accompaniment of the incessant roar of the crowds within and without the walls of the Palace, amid waves of the adoring glances of men and the envious murmur of women, FAÏNA *leaves the automobile and slowly ascends the platform.*

She is in a simple black dress, which clings to her slender figure like a serpent's scales. In her dark hair shines a precious stone, which accentuates the fire of her enormous eyes. In her hand is a long whip. Neither bowing nor smiling, FAÏNA *runs her eyes over the crowd, and makes a slight sign with her whip. The crowd is silent.*

Narrowing her eyes, FAÏNA *sings* THE SONG OF FATE—*easily understood stanzas—in a grave, high, ringing voice. After each stanza, her shoulders tremble almost imperceptibly; yet this causes a threatening tremble of the whip.*)

THE SONG OF FATE

When with my narrow serpent gaze
I tell my love or seek thy praise
  And thy warm hand I press,
Beware! A snake, naught else, am I!
An instant thine, I pass thee by
  And leave thee in distress!

I loathe thy presence! Quit my sight!
Another's shall I be this night!
  Thy faithful wife now seek!
Begone! She will console thy woe!
Let her caress thee, kiss thee!—So,
My whip shall lash thy cheek!

Whoe'er my garden enters now—
Looks on my dark and narrow brow—
  He perishes in fire!
I am all spring, I am all flame!
Come not, nor call me by my name,
Whose love I now desire!

Let reverend age, let youth so rash,
Let him most generous with his cash,
  Come at my ardent call!
On beauty and on hoary hairs,
On every fool that ever dares
  Approach, my lash shall fall!

(*When* FAÏNA *has finished her song, silence reigns for a few moments. Thunderous applause follows.* HERMANN *makes his way to the stage and, becoming animated, speaks louder and louder.*)

HERMANN. I cannot and I will not suffer this!
So this is Culture's mighty day of triumph!
There men must perish—here they play with doom!
Here with a golden song men traffic for
Honor and intellect, duty and fame . . .
Is this the goal to which we are conducted
By endless centuries of lofty dreams!
Machines have now replaced the searching spirit
And mighty fancy has become a gypsy!
Passions once burned! Imperial, soaring thought,
Like towery pinnacles once reached the heavens;
In countless furnaces the soul was smelted;
And age-long choruses were chanted nobly
For naught but this, that a mere gypsy girl,
Breaking into the chorus, with her fierce song
Might choke within us the stern voice of duty!
(*He leaps on the lowest step.*)
Thou with sweet poison hast defiled the heart,
Hast trampled in the dust the tenderest flower;

Thou art guilty of the vilest blasphemy!
Thou hast swept away the soul with thy black train!
A curse upon thee! Mock at us no more!
Down with thy mask! Before thee stands a man!

(FAÏNA *straightens up and becomes all thin and tall, like the whip clenched within her fingers.*)

FAÏNA. Do not come near!

(HERMANN *leaps on the stage. The whip curls in the air and with a sharp crack strikes his face, leaving a red streak on his cheek.*

With an apparently accidental movement, HERMANN *falls on his knees and gazes at* FAÏNA.

The hall has become quiet. The challenging smile on the face of FAÏNA *vanishes. The hand with the whip drops. Her gaze is far away and infinitely sad.*)

FAÏNA. Poor man!

(*And, lifting her black train,* FAÏNA *retires from the stage with the step of a popular favorite. Her mournful* TRAVELING COMPANION, *who has been attentively following what has happened, vanishes at the same moment in the crowd.*)

FRIEND (*in the crowd, with his usual seriousness*). Behold the man!

(*The crowd is already drawn away by the rumor of the execution.*)

FOURTH PICTURE

The huge dressing-room of FAÏNA *is brightly lighted and is furnished luxuriously and tastelessly: it is littered with furniture, set pieces of flowers and bouquets of many colors. In various places sit writers, artists, musicians and poets, who are awaiting* FAÏNA. *Mirrors make their number double, accentuating their likeness to one another.*

WRITER. Gentlemen! While awaiting our beautiful hostess, I suggest that we discuss her traits of character—both obvious and concealed.

ALL (*giggling, each more nastily than the rest*). Good!—With pleasure! If you please! Excellent idea!

WRITER (*striking a pose in the middle of the dressing room*). Attention! I will begin! Like the ancient bard, who glorified, according to custom, the beauty and glory of this world . . . But, gentlemen, the old bard, first of all, was forced to render praise to his master, before whose face he had the honor of glorifying beauty. In our enlightened age, gentlemen, masters no

longer exist . . . (*He smiles significantly. General approval; a tow-haired youth applauds, shouts, and drivels spittle.*) Nevertheless, I see among us our venerable Ivan Ivanovich . . . I propose to you, gentlemen, to honor our much-respected Ivan Ivanovich by silently rising, for applause is out of place here.

(*All rise and bow. The tow-haired youth bows till he is bent double.*)

Famous Writer. I am touched. Really, this is undeserved, gentlemen! Here, in the Temple of Beauty and of Progress, we are all equal. You have caught me unawares; I apologize for an unsuccessful improvisation. There, beyond the walls of this dressing room, is the raucous feast of culture. If there, where hums the merry crowd, welcoming the conquests of the human spirit—if there ranks no longer exist, as my younger colleague has justly remarked, so much the more here, in the dressing-room of beauty itself, we are all equal . . . Therefore, gentlemen . . . long live beauty!

All (*bellowing*). Long live beauty! Long live Ivan Ivanovich! (*A drunken little journalist strikes up the tune "Rest with the saints," but they call him to order. The tow-haired youth writes rapidly in a little book.*)

Youth. Tomorrow this goes to "The Light of Truth"! Day after tomorrow, they will all reprint it!

Writer. Having discharged what is owed to the genius of our venerable Ivan Ivanovich, I now begin to praise beauty . . Not having a lyre, I shall take this chair! Not having cothurni, I mount a stool . . . .

Reporter. He was always clever . . .

Second Writer. What stuff you're talking, my dear boy! They didn't wear cothurni in those days.

Writer. Well, it's all the same, isn't it? . . . He has disturbed me . . . the brute . . . upset my composure . . . (*grumbling, he gets down from the stool.*)

All. Go on! Go on! The fun has just begun

Famous Writer. I repeat, gentlemen: we are all equal. Let's forget our personal accounts. It's no use making historical references here; that might form the topic of a special report. Whoever wishes to stop our fun, let him leave this room . . .

Gentleman in Spectacles. Gentlemen, we were speaking about Faïna. But is there any one of us who actually knows who Faïna is?

Writer. For God's sake, don't be so serious! . . .

You'll kill us all . . . He has the habit of talking for at least two hours on end . . .

SECOND WRITER. If you don't like it, don't listen.

FAMOUS WRITER. If you please, gentlemen. Here we all speak without distinction of literary schools. Even the symbolists can express themselves on the question.

GENTLEMAN IN SPECTACLES. When I look at Faïna, the notion often enters my head: Why are only writers, artists, and actors admitted here, while ordinary mortals are not admitted? . .

WRITER. So that's his idea! So this is a philippic!

SECOND WRITER. Let him alone. You see, in the long run he'll hang himself.

GENTLEMAN IN SPECTACLES. Perhaps my words will not be pleasant for everybody. However, gentlemen, we are all really terribly one-sided and we do not see the face of life itself. We write too much, speak too much, argue too much . . .

WRITER. Then you'd better stop arguing . . .

SECOND WRITER. And writing too . . .

THIRD WRITER. I told you that he'd hang himself!

GENTLEMAN IN SPECTACLES. Just the same, I should like to finish my remarks. You, my friends, cannot understand Faïna . .

WRITER. Why can't we? . . .

GENTLEMAN IN SPECTACLES. She has brought us a part of the national soul. For this we should bow at her feet, not laugh. We writers live the life of the intelligentsia, but Russia, unchangeable in its very being, laughs at us. These millions are wrapped in night; until now their slumbering strength has been silent, but how they despise and hate us. They'll come and, I know, they'll bring us unknown constructive principles. Will there then remain any trace of us? I know not. In my soul an abyss opens wide when I hear the songs of Faïna. These songs are like bonfires: they burn to ashes the sterile, flabby soul of the intelligentsia. Hearing her voice, I feel how weak and insignificant is *my* voice. Perchance people with a new soul have already arrived and are hiding somewhere amongst us, unnoticed. They are only awaiting a sign. They look straight into the face of Faïna, when she sings the Song of Fate. Hearken not to the words of that song, hearken only to her voice: it sings of our weariness and of the new men who will replace us. That is the free Russian song, gentlemen. Distance itself, calling, unknown to us. It is blue mists, red dawns, endless steppes. And what are the words of her song? Perchance *she* sings other words—

we hear naught but sounds.

WRITER. What a symbol he's worked in.

SECOND WRITER. That's not a symbol at all; only low-grade allegory. Our honorable colleague is not one of the prominent representatives of symbolism . . .

FAMOUS WRITER. Not bad. Interesting. Although somewhat abstract and foggy. However, I would apply that reproach to the whole new school. They ought to use more color, vigor, life . . .

GENTLEMAN IN SPECTACLES. But I was only talking about the lack of life . . .

WRITER. Quit, quit!

GENTLEMAN IN SPECTACLES (*sitting down modestly in the corner*). I've finished. I apologize for having monopolized your attention so long.

SECOND WRITER. He always shows off disgustingly. But just the same he'll make a career.

PAINTER. Gentlemen, I shall take the place of the orator who has lost his head. For of what use to me are a lyre and cothurni, symbols and moods? I am merely a painter. Therefore I am going to have the pleasure of telling you how, and under what circumstances, I happened . . .

FOOTMAN (*at the door*). Mademoiselle Faïna is not very well and asks you not to disturb her today.

GENERAL RACKET. Well, that's the limit! It's not the first time!—I won't go! She shall not drive us away!

FAMOUS WRITER. This bores me, gentlemen; bores me to death! You are constantly quarreling over trifles . . . I'm going to leave. (*He puts on his overshoes and hat, and goes out. All are silent for a while.*)

WRITER. He knows when to go.

SECOND WRITER. Not much he doesn't. Hadn't we better go too? They say that great writers know everything that happens a long time in advance.

WRITER. Well, now, sit still. Those are the great men, and we are not great. If she drives us out, it's all right; but if she doesn't, then she'll be the fool. (*However, they all become agitated. One taciturn adorer, who has been constantly twirling in his hands a box of powder from the dressing table of* FAÏNA *lets it fall. The powder rises in clouds. Everyone laughs aloud, trying to conceal his alarm.*)

POET. She's not in a good humor, anyhow. What shall we

do? Shall we pick it up, gentlemen?

WRITER. Pick it up yourselves. (*The* POET *looks for a broom and begins to sweep.*)

SECOND WRITER. He is sweeping the filth out of the temple. (*The* PAINTER *diligently sketches in an album the sweeping* POET. *The* MUSICIANS *purr something, embracing each other. All try to assume unconstrained attitudes. The door opens and* FAÏNA *runs in impetuously. Between her eyebrows is an angry crease. She stops in the middle of the room, flinging her whip in the corner. All jump up.*)

FAÏNA. What kind of people are these? I gave orders not to admit any one.

WRITER (*in a servile tone*). We are writers, painters and poets who venture to disturb you . . .

FAÏNA (*furiously*). Writers? Painters? Poets? Get out!

WRITER. But, my most radiant . . .

FAÏNA (*stamping*). Get out! (*All of the company, bending their backs, awkwardly sneak out.*)

FAÏNA (*at the door*). Old woman! Put out the lights. (*She sits down in an armchair before a large mirror. Through a small door at the side, an old woman comes in and puts out the lights, leaving only one—above the mirror.*)

OLD WOMAN. They'll give it to you, my child, they'll give it to you! . . .

FAÏNA. Well, damn 'em! Let 'em! Much I care!—Oh, I'm tired, old woman . . . So tired . . . I don't want to see anything . . . Comb my hair. Tell me fairy tales.

OLD WOMAN (*combing the dark hair of* FAÏNA, *and reciting, in the usual sing-song way, a fairy tale*). "From the distant blue sea swam a white swan with the face of a maiden. She swam from the palace in the waning twilight, with pearls woven in her dark curls, and white wings that burned like fire." . . .

FAÏNA. Go on. I know about the swan.

OLD WOMAN. "From a distant harbor ships sailed forth, thirty-three sharp-prowed ships. On the first ship is a fine young hero and he stands beneath a checkered sail." . . .

FAÏNA. Beneath a checkered sail? I love that.

OLD WOMAN. "On his dark curls is a cap from beyond the sea and on his shapely shoulders a gay-colored caftan. His cheeks are rosy and his lips are like raspberries." . . .

FAÏNA. Well, hurry up and finish.

Old Woman. "When the fine young hero saw the white swan, he flushed all over. He says to the white swan: 'And will you, white swan, be a young wife to a fine young hero?' As it was said, so it happened." . . .

Faïna (*disappointedly*). So it happened?

Old Woman. . . . "So it happened. The white swan became a wonderful maiden—beautiful, just like the beautiful Faïna. And he took her by her white hands." . . .

Faïna. Ah! . . .

Old Woman. "And he carried her off across the sea and built a palace for her amid white cherry trees, and spread for her a downy feather bed." . . .

Faïna. Stop, old woman. If you don't know any new fairy tales, just be silent. (Faïna *drops into an armchair and turns pale. Her face is now artless, almost childlike: the face of a beautiful woman who is tired and does not care to be charming. Quietly, noticed by no one,* Hermann *comes in, with a bloody streak on his cheek. He stops in the darkest corner, gazes at* Faïna *from behind, and is feebly reflected in the mirror. But the mirror is screened by the* Old Woman—*and* Faïna *does not see* Hermann.)

Faïna. I would have told a story myself, but I am unable to put it into words. But it is a good tale: How it was spring, and the wind wept, but a young wife waited on the river bank . . And there floated towards her, on a floe of ice, such a bright apparition . . . And he burns and shines all over . . . as if he were Jesus Christ himself . . . Only . . . I cannot find words . . . (*becomes thoughtful.*) Really, those lads are having a dull time without me . . . But I don't want 'em. I don't want anybody . . . She stood by the river, and waited . . . I love my river, old woman . .

Old Woman. The river is fine, the high waters . . .

Faïna (*looking into the mirror*). Come, let us tell fortunes, as I used to tell them at Christmas time—shall I not see my future husband in the mirror? Only then I did not have a mirror like this . . . No, I see nothing . . . Go away, old woman: I see no one but you behind me. How old you are and how wrinkled! . . .

Old Woman (*retiring*). Yes, old, my child, old . . .

Faïna (*looking closely*). Do not deceive me, mirror: whosoever it is I see, that man will be my husband. (*Cries out.*) Oh, God!

Old Woman. What is the matter, my child?

FAÏNA. I'm frightened, my precious, I'm frightened . . .

OLD WOMAN. What is the matter, what is the matter? The Lord be with you! . . .

FAÏNA. Look, old woman! Do you see what manner of man is standing there? On his cheek is a dark streak. The Power of the Cross be with us! I do not want such a man! . . I do not want him! . . . (HERMANN *takes a step forward.*) Look, he is coming, he is coming! . . . Ah, I see! (*Her eyes kindle with fury; she turns around.*) Who let you in?

HERMANN. I let myself in.

FAÏNA. How did you dare?

HERMANN. I wanted to see you.

FAÏNA. Do you want me to strike you again?

HERMANN. Beat me.

FAÏNA (*rising*). What sort of person are you? Who are you?

HERMANN. A man.

FAÏNA. A man? You are the first to tell me so. Your face is bleeding.

HERMANN. My heart is bleeding.

FAÏNA. And so you are a man? Good, let us see. (*She takes him by the hand, and for a few moments gazes fixedly into his eyes; he endures the glance of those huge, mad, and secretly sorrowful eyes.*) You have fallen in love? But suppose I weary of you?

HERMANN. If you weary of me, you will drive me away. I have learned much. Here everything is only beginning. From the time that you struck me with the lash.

FAÏNA (*with a smile.*) How did all this start? How did you fall in love? . . . And why? I do not love my own face: you see how tired I am and pale. Men fall in love with me only from afar. But when they come near, immediately they go away again. Can a man possibly fall in love with me? I am merely a chance passer-by.

HERMANN. You are eternal. Like a star.

FAÏNA (*laughing*). Like a star . . . A falling star . . Well, forgive me for having struck you . . .

HERMANN. Whither shall I go? (FAÏNA *becomes thoughtful.* HERMANN *goes toward the door.*)

FAÏNA. Whither are you going?

HERMANN. You told me to go.

FAÏNA (*rising*). But, perhaps, I told an untruth! Do you think, really, that I do not love my own face? Do you think that

my hand has been kissed but rarely? A million times. It means nothing. I long to be treated simply and tenderly. Like a prayer. No one is worthy!

HERMANN (*quietly*). Farewell.

FAÏNA. Wait. You are afraid of me? Come . . . Come here . . . here . . . There is something in your eyes . . . something simple: as in no one's else . . . (*She turns* HERMANN *round by the shoulders and looks into his eyes with laughing, half-closed eyes. He closes his eyes. Then she clasps his cheeks with her hands and greedily kisses his lips.*) Well, I have kissed you, and what of it? There is nothing more! And you thought that it was something? Ah, what a man you are!

FIFTH PICTURE

A wide waste, lit by the autumn moon. In the background, there is a boarded-up building. Round about are patches of moonlight.

In the foreground, from the building a sloping expanse descends, upon which are scattered heaps of broken stone, bricks and beams, and in some places luxuriant autumn grass and weeds are growing. Behind the corner of the building, the vast distance reveals itself.

An endless plain. Here and there alongside the river bed shine peaceful coves left by frequent autumn floods; behind clumps of trees, scattered crosses of churches shine like silver. Somewhere in the distance semaphores, with alternate green and red lights, mark the line of a railway. From that direction come, now and then, a dull rumble and the whistle of a creeping train. Beyond the fields are the bright autumn forests and the peaceful glow of a very distant conflagration. On the horizon are the indistinct outlines of factory chimneys and city towers. To the right is a part of the wooden fence of the park, with a gate. Beyond it, through the pale golden maples, autumn ponds glisten like silver, and in the depths, half hidden in the reeds, sways a sleepy white swan.

Upon the raising of the curtain there is silence for a time. From the distance comes the crowing of an early cock. A train passes. And again silence. Then the wind rushes by, bends the prickly grass, whispers in the nettles, and brings the sound of a bell, then the hasty jingling of smaller bells, and a horse's trampling. Somewhere near by a troika stops.

After a moment, in the foreground of the immeasurable distance and in the glow in the sky, FAÏNA *appears. For some time she stands and gazes far away. Her hair is covered with a black ker-*

chief, and the glow in the sky is like a halo about her head. She wears a Russian festival dress, resembling a sarafan.

FAÏNA *is excited by something; she is pale and her eyes are aflame. She tears and crumples the scarlet ribbons at her belt, which are fluttering in the rushing wind.*

Behind FAÏNA *comes her huge, sorrowful* TRAVELING COMPANION, *in a grey coat and a broad, soft hat, with a stout walking stick in his white hand. By his movements, his costume, and his stately bearing he reminds one of an emperor, or of a distinguished traveler, desirous of visiting a friendly foreign country incognito. When, breathing heavily, he sits down upon a large stone in the middle of the waste, his beard drops low, and on the hand holding the walking stick a costly ring glitters in the moonlight.*

FAÏNA (*wandering about, excited, amidst the grass*). I sleep on swan's down—I forget everything in the world! The troika gallops on—is it possible to breathe while the wind whistles in your face? But you awaken, or you arrive somewhere—and there is nothing to do with yourself! Neither sleep nor wind—nothing! Wind, wind! Do you know what the wind is? God! You cannot take a step without sitting down!

TRAVELING COMPANION (*simply*). I am tired.

FAÏNA (*nervously plucking the leaves*). What does that matter to me! You execute my whims, you take me driving in troikas, and what more can you do for me? Are you really a man? See what manner of woman I am! With me any man would fly to the ends of the earth! Look here, I'll just run away from you! . . .

TRAVELING COMPANION (*raising his head, heavily*). I know that you have thought about that for a long time, Faïna. But what can I do? We are not people of the same sort. Perhaps that is the reason why I love you with so hopeless a love. (*Again he droops his head.*)

FAÏNA. *You* love *me?* For such a love—men are beaten! See, what a night it is! The distance calls! See—the fire there! It smells of burning. Wherever there are open spaces it smells of burning! (*She sits down at the edge of the precipice, hugging her knees, and gazes into the distance, her eyes like those of a witch.*)

TRAVELING COMPANION. Faïna, the dew is heavy. You will lose your voice.

FAÏNA (*not turning*). Let me alone. (*She speaks, addressing space.*) My bridegroom! Stately, fair-haired, with marvelous grey eyes! Come, look! A long time I have awaited

thee, I have gazed my eyes out, I have glowed all over with the redness of dawn, I have expressed my whole being in song, I have dressed myself all in blue mists, as a bride with a long veil.

TRAVELING COMPANION. To whom are you speaking, Faïna?

FAÏNA (*not paying any attention to him*). My bridegroom, come to me; my destined one, look at me! Look into my serene eyes: they await thy storm! Listen to my voice; my voice winds about like a silver stream! Unlock my white hands, take the heavy cross from my maiden's breast! (*stretching her hands over the precipice.*) They awaken me so early; like black crows they soar above me and will not let me sleep. But thou shieldest me from all disasters, thou lettest no one touch me, thou tellest me fairy tales, thou spreadest a bed of swan's down, and thou watchest over my maidenly dreams. I await thee, bright one, I await thy storm. I await my fiery sun! Rise, sun, scatter the clouds, with the fresh wind blow them away! (*The* TRAVELING COMPANION *gets up from the rock, and raises his hat from his forehead. His face becomes visible: it is puffy, with traces of former beauty; on it the wildest storm will awaken nothing but a dull, passive agitation.*)

TRAVELING COMPANION. Faïna . . . You have genius . . .

FAÏNA (*extending her hands over the precipice and murmuring in her prophetic sleep.*) On the night when the forefathers were burning, beyond the scarlet blaze thou didst appear to me on the farther shore. And I rushed to the field, I was beside myself, I gave my whole soul to thee, I let fly all of my songs; like a bird, I soared all night, all night . . . Is that too little for thee? Thou didst deceive me. When I sing a shameless song, do I sing this song? I sing of thee, of thee. Is it little to thee that men are like slaves before me? I wave my hand—and they overwhelm me with gold; I send them to death—and will they go to death? Is it little to thee that I guard myself like the pupil of an eye, that I give no rein to my beauty, that I look past everyone? Or art thou not listening? Autumn wind, carry my voice! Overflowing river, carry tidings of me to my dear one!

TRAVELING COMPANION (*with emotion*). Faïna, my dear, be calm, . . . You are distraught . . . You must rest . . .

FAÏNA (*wringing her hands*). My God! Thou seest—he is leading me away! Old, quiet, imperious—again he is leading me away! Listen to me! Listen! Free me! (*She stops and waits.*

Her voice, ringing somewhere with a silver echo, dies away.)

TRAVELING COMPANION (*cautiously*). Faïna . . .

FAÏNA (*in a terrible rage*). Never! . . . I tell you: never! I have slept my whole life! I shall not sleep all night! I do not want you! (*throwing herself on the earth.*) My native soil! My soil! Storms! Storms! Or—silence! Give me of your silence, your black silence, your unruffled silence! (*She rises, with tears sparkling like diamonds in her eyes.*) Out there, beyond the grating . . . it is quiet . . . The white swan is sleeping . . . Listen! (*She stamps angrily*) Thou wilt come. Thou wilt find me! I hurl my scarlet ribbon to thee! (*She violently tears the scarlet ribbon from her belt and hurls it over the precipice. Then she quickly goes to the grating, opens the gate, and disappears in the park. The sorrowful* TRAVELING COMPANION *follows her with heavy steps. Silence. The distant rumble of a train. The moon grows pale. Redness of dawn in the sky. The cocks begin to crow to one another—farther and farther away. The morning breeze arises, rustling everything more and more boldly and with ever greater animation. And slowly, increasing and broadening, rises the first solemn wave of the world's orchestra. It is as if someone had already risen behind the conductor's stand, restraining until the proper time the passionate emotion of the world's violins.*

Climbing the slope, HERMANN, *with an easy bound, leaps to the place where* FAÏNA *has been conjuring and calling. The scar from the blow of the whip is still noticeable on his shining face; in his dilated eyes there is the foreboding of a storm. Like* FAÏNA, *he rises above the slope and gazes into the distance. In his hands is the scarlet ribbon. After a moment, the* FRIEND OF HERMANN *climbs up on the slope, shivering from the morning cold.*)

HERMANN. Morning! Morning!

FRIEND. When will you at last grow calm? You drag me after you all night over waste, and you thrust the beauties of nature into my face when I'm mortally sleepy . . .

HERMANN. I should like to know who dropped the red ribbon? Such a scarlet ribbon—like the dawn! And it smells of fresh flowers!

FRIEND (*with a slight laugh*). It must be some beautiful unknown maiden who left you the ribbon. You have become very manly and you have grown handsome, Hermann; perchance a singer would not now lash you with a whip . . .

HERMANN. You laugh even at this, as if you did not know

how important it is to me. It is not only my face, but also my whole heart that has bled. My heart awakened and it seemed to beat more strongly . . . Then I heard inspiring music that aroused me—it has continually pursued me since that time: with each sunrise it is ever louder, more majestic. At night I suddenly wake, and someone's voice says to me: "Thou art chosen, thou art chosen." And I cannot sleep again: I wander through the streets enchanted, I rush into the fields, into this intoxicating autumn smell of fire! Thus pass days and weeks—and my soul is like a roaring waterfall! If I could only know whither to direct its power! I know not! I know how much work is to be done, but I am unable to begin, unable to distinguish! And again the same voice whispers, warningly, that morning has not begun, that the mist has not lifted, that in the mist it is impossible to distinguish good and evil . . . But I yearn to do so! My God! What a terrible joy, what a heavy burden is this intoxicating, starving, eternally loving spirit!

(*The wind swoops down and bends the grass—and, hidden for an instant behind the swaying grass, the* FRIEND *speaks in a laughing, provoking voice.*)

FRIEND. A spirit always in love. Be careful, Hermann. You have left your home. Your wife is waiting for you. Ah, Hermann, is your conscience, of which you are so proud, clear and untroubled?

HERMANN (*trembling*). I forgot that you were here. Sometimes you have such a terrible voice! I do not see you—where are you? Ah, this wind has hidden you in the grass . . . Yes, I have left my home, I have hearkened to the command of the wind, I have seen spring through the window, I have heard the Song of Fate! Is it criminal to look through the window?

FRIEND. Beware, Hermann!

HERMANN. You will frighten me no more. I see you, I have known you for a long time. I fled from her! I fled from her kiss! I fled, I fell, and again I fled—and so I forgot her! I do not remember her face! I do not even remember those dreadful eyes! (*The* FRIEND *guffaws joyously. And the wind guffaws with him.*)

FRIEND. However, you recalled the eyes! Really, are they not beautiful eyes?

HERMANN. You do not understand me! Do you think that I am a slave? No, I am free! I merely do not know whither to go, but all the paths are free!

FRIEND. And you will go by all of them at once? . . .

HERMANN (*shouting*). I am faithful! I am faithful! No one dares insinuate treason! You understand nothing! The path is free—indeed, here life is only beginning! Here duty is but beginning! When the path is free, you must inevitably follow it. Perhaps all that is tenderest, all that is most sacred—must be destroyed! Even spring is destructive: in spring the earth is full of murmurs, the skies are red, and there is blue mist in the hollows. Listen! I had to flee from that quiet home, from that inescapable happiness! Because the wind opened the window, the monk came, I dreamed dreams, things unknown broke in—I don't know, I don't know . . .

FRIEND. You quarrel so hotly—as if you were not confident of yourself, or wished to justify yourself. I really do not accuse you; I welcome your lack of principle . . .

HERMANN. You know nothing, nothing! I am not alone! *I* did not leave of my own accord! The wind summoned me, it sang me a song; I am in terrible agitation, as before some heroic deed! . . . My heart burns and awaits something, and weeps about something, but already it triumphs, it celebrates a victory in advance. And it is as if this immeasurable space, together with my heart, also burned, and grieved, and were striving to flee in some direction along with me!

FRIEND. I do not understand what you are disturbed about. You are terribly preoccupied with yourself, you do not find a place for yourself, you are beside yourself . . . What is the purpose of all this?

HERMANN (*with increasing passion*). You ask, why? Consider me a madman if you wish. Yes, perhaps I am on the threshold of insanity . . . or of recovery of my sight! Everything that was, everything that is to be—has surrounded me: it is as if in these days I were living the life of all times, living with the tortures of my country. I remember the terrible day of the battle of Kulikovo.* The Prince took his stand with his bodyguard on the hill, the earth trembled from the creaking of the Tatar wagons, the crying of the eagles threatened misfortune. Then an ill-omened night crept on, and the Nepryadva** was decked with mist, as a bride with her veil. The Prince and the commander of the army took their stand beneath the hill and hearkened to the earth: swans and geese tumultuously splashed, the widow la-

*In 1380 Prince Dmitry of Moscow defeated the Tatars at the battle of Kulikovo. Hermann's speech contains reminiscences of the *Zadonshchina*, a Russian prose poem composed soon after that event. **The Nepryadva is a small river.

mented, the mother clutched at the stirrup of her son. Only above the Russian camp silence stood and the distant heat lightning flickered. But the wind drove off the mist, and an autumn morning just like this came on, and, I remember, there was also the smell of burning wood. And the shining princely banner moved down from the hill. When a monk and a Tatar were the first to fall dead, the hosts came to blows, and the whole day they fought, slashed at each other, gnashed at each other . . But the fresh troops had to sit all day in ambush, only to gaze, and weep, and yearn for the battle . . . And their commander repeated, warningly: "It is still early, our hour has not yet come."—God! I know how each one of those idle soldiers felt, how each heart begged for work, and it was still early, early! . . . But now—it is morning! Again the solemn music of the sun, like the war trumpets, like the distant battle . . . But I am here, like a soldier in ambush; I dare not fight, I know not what to do: I must not act, my hour has not yet come! This is why I cannot sleep at night: I await, with all my heart, the man who shall come and say: "Thine hour has struck! It is time!"

(*In the depths of the park gleams the black kerchief of* Faïna. *Mist rises over the morning ponds. In the reeds an awakened swan raises its head and cries with a trumpet-like voice towards the rising sun.* Faïna *advances. Her movements are uncertain, as if she were scourged by a deadly grief, and she seems to have no way of escape, like a thunder cloud; she is borne on by the singing, bending grass and the morning breeze.*

The swan cries and beats its wings. Filling the air with the passionate resonance of her voice, Faïna *chimes in with it.*)

Faïna. Come to me! I am tired of living! Free me! I do not wish to fall asleep! Prince! Friend! Bridegroom!

(*The entire world's orchestra joins in the passionate summons of* Faïna. *From all the ends of the earth rush the waves of the morning melodies. Shattering all fetters, breaking all dikes, the whole sea of the world's violins celebrates the victory of passion. At this very moment, on the horizon, rising above the lilac-colored strip of the distant clouds, emerges the narrow rim of the red sun's disk, and all the gold of the woods bursts into flame, all the silver of the river's windings, all the windows of the distant villages, and all the crosses on the churches. Submerging the earth and sky with radiance, the face of the sun creeps up above the precipice, and against it stands the ecstatic figure of* Hermann, *with flaming face.* Faïna

approaches, reeling, and raises her arms in rapture.)

FAÏNA. Hail!

HERMANN. You beat me with a lash. You poisoned me with a kiss. You came to me in dreams each night. You hurled a scarlet ribbon over the precipice to me.

FAÏNA. No, you are not that one. He was dark, malicious, and wretched. You are bright, you have fair hair, your face burns with the fire of the Lord!

HERMANN. See, I have a red scar on my face from your lash.

FAÏNA (*seizing him by the hand and looking into his face*). That is the sun, glowing on your face! You are he for whom I have waited. The swan cries, the trumpet calls! The hour has struck! Come!

HERMANN (*in fear and ecstasy*). On your face is all fate! You are days without sunset! The hour has struck!

(FAÏNA *solemnly loosens her scarlet girdle and bows herself down at* HERMANN'S *feet. The swan becomes silent. Only the sea of the world's violins celebrates the triumph of passion. And, choking and trembling, like the earth before the sun,* FAÏNA *cries out with the trumpet-like voice of a swan.*)

FAÏNA. Old man, old man, farewell! Old man, I am free! Old man, I am a bride! The troika! The troika!

(*She draws* HERMANN *in the direction of the bells of the troika, which tremble, aroused by her voice. After a moment, the call of the driver, a whistle, and a horse's trampling are heard; the voice of a little bell, overcoming the tinkling, enters the world's orchestra, takes prëminence in it, and then disappears, perishes, sinking away somewhere in the distance on the shining plain.*

The sorrowful, lonely TRAVELING COMPANION *seats himself on the large stone in the middle of the waste. His beard has fallen completely over his chest, his white hands have dropped the walking stick. The costly ring shines on his helpless finger like a diamond tear. And, as if it were one with him, the wavering, faithless voice of the wind changes into a moan and a sob, and in the air farewell clouds of golden leaves begin to whirl.*)

SIXTH PICTURE

The house of HERMANN. *A clear winter day. Hills, bushes, and roads are covered with snow.*

ELENA *is standing at the porch door, and the* FRIEND *of* HERMANN *is descending the steps.*

FRIEND. Farewell.

ELENA. Everything is over between us.

FRIEND. Thank you. You are driving me from your house because I love you.

ELENA. No, not because of that.

FRIEND. Was it not because I told you the truth about how your husband had deceived you?

ELENA. For the last time I ask you not to scoff at things sacred.

FRIEND. Oh, I shall never again even utter that name. Farewell . . .

ELENA. Wait . . . You are, after all, still able to understand something, are you not? Forget for a moment that you are in love with me; that is not really hard for you. Tell me simply, in a friendly fashion, as one to another: Is Faïna a pretty woman?

FRIEND. It embarrasses me to speak about that woman. Perhaps she is beautiful, but there is nothing mysterious, nothing womanly in her. I can only wonder . . .

ELENA. You needn't waste any wonder—that's the whole point. I wish you every happiness. We part in peace.

FRIEND. So you are not angry with me?

ELENA. I—with you? Not in the least. Do you want me to tell you the truth?

FRIEND. Yes. After all, it's really all the same to you if I go mad from your coldness and contempt.

ELENA. Oh, no! . . . You will never go mad. And you will never tire of playing a part, because you are the most ordinary, most commonplace person. Whether you threaten a person, or frighten, or jibe—you never hurt anybody. You are what people call the golden mean . . . That is enough for you.

FRIEND. Well, good-bye. You have never understood me; I know that. What can I do? I wish you happiness . . . with your monk . . .

ELENA. Poor, poor man . . . How sorry I am for you . . . Lord! And all people are like that . . . So unhappy!

(*The* FRIEND *goes out.* ELENA *seats herself on the porch and weeps quietly. In a short time the* MONK *comes out of the door.*)

MONK. You have endured much. You were not born to an easy life. Look at yourself: how healthy and young and strong you are.

ELENA. How he loved me! . . . How he loved me! . . .

MONK. And you are going to weep a long time?

ELENA. All my life . . . all my life . . . But why do you ask?

MONK. Do people like you weep all their lives?

ELENA. I shall weep all my life . . . Weeping will not drive away my grief . . .

MONK. You will weep a little—and you will cease. I have seen many tears: it is only mothers who are consumed by them; a mother to whom nothing is left in the world except her son. But before you your whole life stretches out. Just look: a white road; you have still to travel the whole way . . . Listen, Elena; you know yourself, I have nowhere to go from here, and I have not much longer to live . . .

ELENA. What do I care about you? Whether you live, or whether you die, it is all the same to me. My own trouble is great enough.

MONK. I do not care about my own welfare, Elena. You must think of one thing—that your husband has gone . . .

ELENA. We should have lived peacefully . . .

MONK. But is it possible for a living man to exist peacefully now, Elena? Everything entirely crushes a living man: he looks around him—there are only the tears of men; he looks far away—and he yearns to penetrate that remoteness . . .

ELENA. I understand. And Hermann spoke of this. But yet, I, too, am beautiful. And my soul is like the distance.

MONK. Your soul is quiet, Elena. Now you are listening to me. But the other one—would she have listened? She has no rest—neither by night nor by day . . .

ELENA. You speak as if you saw her . . .

MONK (*looking into the distance*). I see, my dear one. I see.

ELENA (*in terror*). Whom do you see?

MONK. The land where I was born.

ELENA. People do not know; they do not understand . . . Even you do not understand. In the Scripture it is said: "The prophet saw the Lord neither in fire nor in a strong wind, but in the still, small voice."

MONK. I myself thought that I understood, dear. But no: this is a great mystery. How can I understand? Who will understand? You see what manner of man I am: and the life that remains in me is like the wax in a candle after mass; I have

wandered through all monasteries; I have gazed with all my powers; and behold: I gaze, and again it draws me—I cannot free myself from it . . .

ELENA. And so you think that Hermann will not return? You are absurd. I thought that you were wiser. Is it that he is better than I?

MONK (*smiling*). You ask me who is better and who is worse? But can one say which is better: a tempest or a calm?

ELENA. Shame on you, monk. Look at yourself: it is time for you to die, but you—are in love . . . Lord! And no one will console me! My Hermann, mine! He and I need nothing but our quiet white house . . .

MONK. His mother is dead. The quiet house is no more, Elena.

ELENA. Why is it not? What are you saying? Hermann will come back! He has left everything here. Go into the house: all his books, all his things; even the ragged mittens that he wore when he dug in this flower garden are on the table! All his soul is here . . .

MONK. Hermann's soul is given away . . .

ELENA. How dare you say this to me? To me, whom he loved and loves? My Hermann! Be still, oh, foolish, foolish monk . . . (*Weeps bitterly.*)

MONK. Weep, Elena. You will weep away your whole soul, you will expire in a cry—then you will find out for yourself . . .

ELENA (*rising*). Be still, monk. He said to me: "I shall come back soon." (*She stands perfectly erect; she silently gazes into the distance, at the snowy road.*) Thence will he come. (*At this moment there is wafted in from the plain some sort of sound, tender, soft, musical: as if a raven had cawed, or someone had touched a tightly drawn string.*)

ELENA. You heard?

MONK. I heard.

ELENA. What shall I do?

MONK. Dress more warmly Light the nuptial candle. (ELENA *obediently goes into the house. The* MONK *quietly sits on the porch and chants: "Where there is neither sorrow nor lamentation . . . "* ELENA *comes out with a lighted candle.*)

ELENA. Am I dressed properly?

MONK. Yes, my dear.

ELENA. What shall I do now?

MONK. Place the candle on the porch . . . (*He kneels.* ELENA *does likewise. Then they rise.*)

ELENA. Now what shall I do, friend? (*The* MONK *quietly chants: "Life everlasting . . ."* ELENA, *in a warm fur coat, stands in front of him.*)

ELENA. Do not sing the psalm for the dead. My heart is bursting.

MONK. I sing from joy, Elena. My joy is due to the fact that your beloved is alive.

ELENA. Alive. I know, I know.

MONK. It is too soon for him to die. He has merely lost his way. Here you both shall live, Elena. Bend down. I give you this, darling, for the road. (*He hangs a small cross about her neck.*)

ELENA. Where shall I go, friend?

MONK. There it is, your white, snowy road. The long path, the path of many years. But at the end of the path is the soul of Hermann.

ELENA. But at the end of the path is the soul of Hermann.

MONK. Knock, and thou shalt find it. Thou art strong. Go, my child; the Lord be with thee.

ELENA. Thank you, friend.

MONK. And I thank you, my dear, for all you have done.

ELENA. Farewell, friend. (*Weeps.*) Keep the quiet house.

MONK. I shall keep it, my child. And the Lord shall keep thee.

(ELENA *descends and, turning, looks on her quiet, snow-covered house. Then—she departs. The* MONK *cautiously closes the door and fastens the shutters. Then he seats himself on the step and looks after* ELENA. *On the porch the candle burns.*)

SEVENTH PICTURE

A cloudy, frosty day. An empty plain covered with snow. In the center is a snowy hillock. The wind whistles and threatens a blizzard; through the wind gay little bells tinkle, as if they were far off in the distance. HERMANN *is standing on the hillock.*

HERMANN. All now is past. To me my former life
Seems but a dream. This day is cold and pale.
My soul is like the steppe, unfetteréd
By any aims, boundlessly free, from end
To end. A feeble man, who always knew
The comforts of a home, the warmth and light

Of his own hearth, one who could not endure
Such perfect freedom and such rapturous bliss.
Now in my soul I sense a novel coldness,
Wandering and healthy, like the winter air,
Piercing as needles of the snowy blast,
Yet burning as the dark gaze of Faïna.
I seem to be baptized a second time,
Christened again in some cold, snowy font.
No puny life for me! Three lives were little!
What care I now for quiet hearth and home;
I need a world wherein the wild wind sings!
I wish no slavish death: for me let life
And death be blended in a storm of snow!

(*The blizzard begins to roar; the day grows darker.*)

Voice of Faïna. Hermann, where are you?

Hermann. Here! Come to me! Come to the snowy hill! (Faïna *appears out of the darkness, seizes* Hermann *by the hand, and gazes with rapture on him. The blizzard passes by, and it becomes brighter.*)

Faïna. I was unable to hold the horses. They were afraid of something, bolted into a snow drift, and ran off . . . (*Laughing.*) Now we are alone. Why are you standing there, so high?

Hermann. It is clearer here.

Faïna. It is clearer *here!* Here I am alone! Sit next to me. Tell me about yourself; you have told me nothing yet.

Hermann (*seating himself at the foot of the hillock, beside her*). There is nothing to tell. There was nothing. What I am to do I know not: you are greater than I. Just to sigh for glory at your feet! You look at me with an unfamiliar, burning glance; but I am insignificant, a stranger, I am weak—I can do nothing . . . I remember nothing . . . nothing . . .

Faïna. Nothing but words! Beautiful words! And your childhood? Kindred, family, home, wife? And the city? And my lash—you remember?

Hermann. Only the lash. And nothing more. The blow of your lash deafened me; it killed all the past. Now my soul is covered with white, white snow. And there is nothing to lose—nothing sacred . . . And there is nothing of which to speak, because my soul, like the earth, is buried in snow.

Faïna. There! All of you are like that . . . You are dead . . . but I am alive. I have never had a home, nor

kindred, nor close friends. Whither I wish, there I go.

HERMANN. Trample not on the flowers of the soul! They are the blue flowers of springtime . . . What are they to you? You, Faïna, I carry in my heart. The rest—has ended. Perhaps I shall die in the snow. It is all the same: I can die. (*He lies down in the snow, his face towards the sky.*)

FAÏNA. Again—words! You have lived too little for death! It is only in fairy tales that people die! . . . (*She suddenly jumps up and cries sonorously.*) Ah, be careful! The blizzard is coming! (*The snow rushes on, and with it comes darkness. Out of the distance a trembling voice is heard singing.*)

"Oh! How full, how full my basket!
Calicoes, brocades, a stack.
Come, my sweeting, make it lighter,
Ease the doughty fellow's back."*
(*The song is cut short.*)

FAÏNA. —You hear?

HERMANN. Someone is coming—far away.

FAÏNA (*bending low, and looking at* HERMANN *in the darkness*). He is lost—wandering about and singing a song . . . No one will disturb us; they all will pass by. (*Twines her arms about his neck.*) My darling! My dear one! . . .

HERMANN. I am afraid, Faïna.

FAÏNA. Have no fear, my dear one: no one will know . . . Just such a man as you I saw in my dream . . . Just such a man I awaited night after night on the river . . .

HERMANN. You look straight into the soul . . . with your black eyes . . .

FAÏNA. No. That is not true. Look closer: it is only by night that my eyes are black. By day they are bright brown: do you see—brown? Have no fear, Hermann, poor boy, dear boy, with your fair hair . . . (*She moves her face still nearer him. And again, there is heard, nearer*)

"Steal into the rye-fields yonder,
There till night-fall I'll delay;
When I see thy black eye shining,
All my wares I shall display."
(*The song is broken off.*)

FAÏNA. Do you hear?

*This and the later verses are from *The Pedlers*, by Nekrassov (1821-77). The translations are taken from *Poems by Nicholas Nekrassov*, translated by Juliet M. Soskice (Oxford University Press).

HERMANN. No . . . It is quiet . . . I have never felt such quiet . . . There the quiet was different . . . (*The blizzard passes by, and again it grows bright.*)

FAÏNA (*sitting down as before*). Ah, Hermann! Your wife—is she weeping for you?

HERMANN. Was that in a dream, Faïna?

FAÏNA (*sharply*). A dream! Do you hear the wind weeping? That is your wife weeping! (*She begins to listen restlessly. In the sighs of the wind the former note awakens; it is as if someone were sobbing appealingly, plaintively, inconsolably.*)

HERMANN. Do not mention her, Faïna.

FAÏNA. I am free to mention her! Free to do anything! Free to go away, to strangle her—free to do anything! Listen to the wind! Listen!

HERMANN. Why are you so hard?

FAÏNA. Because I waited, and found nothing! Because you were a man only so long as your face was covered with blood!—Lord! Lord! Become a man again! (*The blizzard sobs in the distance with the same tears as before.*)

HERMANN. Your words and your looks beat me like a lash, like the blizzard.

FAÏNA. I beat you for your words! Many pretty words you have uttered! But do you really know anything except words?

HERMANN. I know everything. I know everything now. Trouble me not: no more will you awaken me with a lash, nor with a kiss.

FAÏNA (*in alarm*). Ah, Hermann, be careful! Hermann, the blizzard is coming!

HERMANN. It is all the same! Do not waken me! Let another man find the road.

FAÏNA (*in mad alarm*). Are you falling asleep, Hermann? It is time to awaken; it is time! (*The blizzard rushes on. Darkness and the ringing of bells. The old tears sound even more clearly.*)

HERMANN. I see nothing. I remember nothing. Whose eyes are these, that are so dark? Whose words are these, that are so soft? Whose hands are these, that are so tender? Are you my bride? Uncover your face.

FAÏNA (*nestling up close to him*). Awaken—all will be new: I shall wave my figured sleeve, I shall sing a dashing song, we shall fly away with the troika . . . Farther from him . . . farther . . .

HERMANN (*in delirium*). Whither? All the roads are

covered with snow . . .

FAÏNA. To my heart I shall press you, my desired one. Listen, listen: my heart is beating, my heart is awakening, the hot red blood begins to sing; listen, listen! . . .

HERMANN (*in delirium*). I hear a ringing. The horses have dashed off. Uncover your face. I do not remember you.

FAÏNA (*in distress*). It is not death, but life, that I breathe upon you. (*She puts a handful of snow to his forehead.*) My darling! My desired one, kiss me! He is calling! The old man is calling! The man of power is summoning! Kiss me!

HERMANN. What is this? Are machines screeching; are men dying? Yes, yes: the wide squares, the long rows of lights . . . This is the city, the huge city . . . A gray tower . . . from the tower some one is looking at me . . . Who is it? Ah my Mother, my Mother! She is nodding. What are you saying? Mother! I do not hear . . .

FAÏNA. Awaken, my own! Mother is calling!

HERMANN. Who is this? An angel in white garments. Golden locks of hair! Wings at her shoulders! How she shines! In her hands is a lily . . . a lily or a candle? A nuptial candle! Elena! Oh, God! Elena!

FAÏNA (*in mad anguish*). Awaken, Hermann! Enough of sleep! I alone am here! Awake!

HERMANN. She says: "Awake, Hermann!" No, no: it is all the same to her; all the same . . . She points me the way . . . How white it is there. She nods to me . . . She goes . . . She has gone . . . She is here no more. It is cold. What lustre! What sounds! What is this? A horn? The dry crackling of drums! There, he is coming . . . the hero is coming—in a winged helmet, with a sword on his shoulder . . . and towards me . . .

FAÏNA (*nestling close up to him*). What do you see now? What do you remember now?

HERMANN. Thou—art thou coming to meet me—inevitable one? Fate? What dark eyes! What cold lips! Do not question me . . . It is dark . . . It is cold. I cannot remember . . . (FAÏNA *raises the head of* HERMANN. *She looks at him with wide open eyes.*)

HERMANN. Was this all a dream? Faïna! You know the road?

FAÏNA (*with anguish and tenderness greater than ever before*). You love me?

HERMANN. I love you.

FAÏNA. You know me?

HERMANN. I do not know you.

FAÏNA. You will find me?

HERMANN. I shall find you. (*And suddenly, close by, there is heard a victoriously sad melody, carried by the snow storm.*)

"Well, the sombre night alone knows
How they managed to agree:
Straighten up, you tall, slim rye-stalks,
Keep the secret faithfully."

FAÏNA. Thrice I kiss you. The time has not yet come for us to meet. He is calling. Live. Love me. Seek me. My old man, my man of power, my man of gloom has come for me. I shall be near. My own, my belovéd, my desired one! Farewell! Farewell! (*The weeping snow storm carries away the last words of* FAÏNA. FAÏNA *runs away into the blizzard and the darkness.* HERMANN *remains alone at the foot of the hill.*)

HERMANN. All is white. Only one thing remains: that for which I have prayed Thee, Lord: a clear conscience. And there is no road. What shall I do; I, a beggar? Where shall I go? (*The darkness is almost absolute. There is only snow and wind. And suddenly, by the side of* HERMANN, *appears a passer-by.*)

PEDLER. Ah, who is there? Why are you standing there? Do you want to freeze to death?

HERMANN. I shall find my way.

PEDLER. Well, move on, friend, move on: a saint wouldn't want to stand here too long; and people like us can't; the snow will cover them. There are plenty of people it has rocked and lulled to sleep . . .

HERMANN. But do you know the road?

PEDLER. I know it, how can I help knowing? But you aren't from hereabouts, are you?

HERMANN. No.

PEDLER. Do you see the fire over there?

HERMANN. No, I do not see it.

PEDLER. Well, look hard, and you will see. But where are you going?

HERMANN. I don't know.

PEDLER. You don't know? Queer man. So you're a tramp! Well, go on; don't just stand in this one spot. I'll lead you to a place near by, and then you can go where you want.

HERMANN. Lead me, stranger. Then I shall go whither you wish.

THE END

ON THE EARLY ENGLISH ANTHOLOGIES

By C. C. H. Williamson

An anthology executed in cold blood is always unnecessary, perhaps unpardonable. The anthologist who adds enthusiasm to knowledge may hope to do justice to his subject, and may persuade others to echo his admirations and share his pleasures.

Tottel's Miscellany is the book for which Slender would have given forty shillings to have with him to help him in courting Mistress Anne; the book from which Hamlet's Gravedigger learned his immortal song, which he sang, grunting into it extra syllables:

> To contract-oh!-the time for-ah!-my behove
> Oh!-methought there was nothing meet;

the book which was in Mistress Quickly's memory when she declared that Falstaff felt "as cold as any stone"—is a book which should have a secure place in the affections of all lovers of the English tongue.

It is an enchanting, almost an enchanted, book. One feels the waft of the magic wand fluttering its pages The ugly dwarf turns in his sleep and wakes into the lovely princess for a moment, then shrinks back again. He sloughs his skin, like a Lamia, before our eyes. He hobbles and stumps; then suddenly glides and dances. Sir Thomas Wyatt was counting out his syllables on his fingers, when they shaped themselves into the thing of beauty:

> They flee from me that sometime did me seek
> With naked foot stalking within my chamber.

Did it sound to him as it sounds to us? Assuredly not. He read it, probably, much as a schoolboy to-day reads an ode of Horace *stalking within.* But the miracle happened, and one of the loveliest verbal musics in our language was born. Such moments are always in wait for the reader of Tottel. A frigid little "comparison of love to a streame falling from the Alpes" melts for an instant into loveliness:

> From these high hills as when a spring doth fall
> It thrilleth down with still and subtle course.

And, on the very same page as "They flee from me," this little song:

> Madame, withouten many wordes:
> Once I am sure, you will or no.
> And if you will: then leave your boordes
> And use your wit and show it so:
> For with a beck you shall me call.

And if of one, that burns alway,
Ye have pity or ruth at all
Answer him fayer with yea or nay.
If it be yea, I shall be faine,
If it be nay: frendes as before,
You shall another man obtayn:
And I mine own, and yours no more.

Our anthologies have been singularly happy in their names. *A Paradise of Dainty Devices* tempts you to come in and be happy at once. *England's Parnassus*, not so suggestive, has its own virtue of sonorous brevity. *The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* would delight our ears if it were not too familiar to be noticed, with its beautiful balance of weight and lightness, and our minds with its hinted contrast between the gold which is lost as soon as spent and that of poetry which is used and shared and treasured all at once. *The Spirit of Man* is a challenge, and *The Paradise of Poetry* an allurement, in four words. And so *England's Helicon* has been both in two. It was a challenge, perhaps, in its own day, when no foreigner knew that England had drunk at all of the fountain of the Muses; and in our day it is an allurement with its double suggestion of the classics, born once in Greece and new-born here in the England of Elizabeth, and its delightful sound, in which the brief strength of England is so pleasantly answered and echoed by the quick dance of Helicon. And, on the whole, it deserves its happy name.

Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody* was considered by Bullen, who reprinted the whole series of them, the most valuable of our old anthologies. But that, again, was the scholar's view; there is much more in the *Rhapsody* which can be traced to no other source, while, if "only a bare list of the first lines of the poems" had been preserved, we could succeed in restoring *England's Helicon* from other printed sources. This makes the task of annotating it less absorbing, but takes nothing away from the pleasure of the general reader, who finds more enjoyable verse in *England's Helicon* than in the *Rhapsody*.

I know of only three collections which attest a really extensive knowledge of the period and contain a really substantial number of "discoveries." Locker-Lampson's *Lyra Elegantiarum* was devoted to the lighter kinds of poetry only; but it proves that its compiler's reading was as wide as his taste was sure. The useful collections of Professor Arber testified to a still wider reading if not to a still more admirable taste. Finally, there is *The Book of Georgian Verse* by the indefatigable American anthologist, William Stanley Braithwaite.

For there is a sameness, not altogether disagreeable about the contents of *The Phoenix Nest* which leaves little doubt in the mind of a discerning reader that they were composed by men who stood on common ground. The quality, which differentiates these poems from those which fill more popular collections, can be called, for want of a better word, aristocratic. Reading them one feels that their authors had little to complain of in this life but the pangs of love; that their lives were as ordered as the beds of flowers bordering the noble houses they frequented and as smooth as the lawns upon which they walked. The flowers to which they compare their mistresses' features, the trees and streams, birds and beasts to whom thy confide their sorrows belong, not to wild nature, but to chaste and refined gardens and "Wildernesses," remote from vulgar eyes. Only the frequent images taken from the sea—there are examples on almost every page—remind us that these poems were written in an age of triumph and discovery on the sea. But here the sea is not, as it seemed to the French Symbolists, a symbol of emancipation and escape so much as a fearful reminiscence of storms past and difficulties overcome, a symbol, in fact, of desperate trials and straits of the lover:—

> To write the temper of my last desire,
> That likes me best, and appertains you most:
> You are the Pharos whereto now retire,
> My thoughts long wand'ring in a forren coast.

When Mr. William Byrd, one of the gentlemen of the Queen's Majesty's honourable Chapel, produced his first book of Psalms, Sonnets, and Songs in 1588 he prefaced it with eight "reasons," whereby he hoped "to persuade everyone to learn to sing." Singing is "delightful to Nature," he asserts, "and good to preserve the health of man; it doth strengthen all the parts of the breast and doth open the pipes; it is a singular good remedy for stuttering and stammering," and so on. "Since singing is so good a thing," concludes the appropriately-named Mr. Byrd, "I wish all men would learn to sing."

And it really seems as if the majority of his fellow-countrymen acted on this advice. The following twenty-five years, from 1588 onwards, were the golden age of vocal music in England. In the great country houses, it was the custom when supper was finished, about half-past-six, to deal round the song books. At the long tables still they sat, the family and their guests, each with lighted taper and his part-book before him, and the flasks of wine conveniently at hand. They were resonant places, those

dining-halls, with their rush-strewn stone floors and lofty rafters. To be able to sing a part, to keep time and tune in a piece of contrapuntal music, had come to be a fashionable accomplishment, a sign of good breeding. It is easy to picture them, those Elizabethan gallants and ladies, conning their books, humming a part, then silent for the note that would set the pitch—and the singing began and echoed through the hall. Yes, and what songs were theirs to sing! They had composers like Gibbons, Weelkes, Byrd, Wilbye and Morley to make them tunes; they had poets like Spenser, Marlowe, Drayton, Philip Sidney, Campion and Walter Raleigh to supply the words, those fortunate Elizabethans. It may seem strange that the delicious lyrics of Shakespeare were not used for madrigals, but we have to remember that the sudden flood of madrigal writing was over within twenty-five years, while the First Folio was not published until 1623.

Another point which, at first sight, may seem surprising is that the authorship of many quite charming lyrics from the song-books is very doubtful, while of many more it is undiscovered and, probably, undiscoverable. Yet the explanation is simple. In Elizabethan days a great many gentlemen wrote verse, but took considerable pains that their work should not be identified. That was the pose of their age. Puttenham observed in 1589: "And in her Majesty's time that now is are sprung up another crew of courtly (verse) makers, noblemen and gentlemen of her Majesty's own servants, who have written excellently well, as it would appear if their doings could be found out and made public with the rest." There was a general feeling, however, that this would not do. To quote Selden's *Table-talk*, "'Tis ridiculous for a lord to print verses; 'tis well enough to make them to please himself, but to make them public is foolish." Yet if my lord would not affront public opinion by printing his verses under his own name, on occasion he would supply copies of them, under pledge of secrecy, to his friends the musical composers, and by their help the anonymous lyrics have been preserved.

Though its intrinsic excellences are great, its importance in English literature is far greater. This was the most popular book of poetry in England when the great Elizabethans were boys. The famous commonplaces, the persistent tunes, are all to be found in *Tottel's Miscellany*. It was perhaps the chief of the sources whence the great poets learned their craft and their language. It is one of the books which the student of Shakespeare must have at his finger-ends, for it will save him much vain

following after siren-voices which would persuade him that the Elizabethan dramatists borrowed exclusively from one another. They all borrowed royally from Tottel.

Why did the vision of the idle and amorous shepherd thus fascinate the Elizabethan fancy? The illustrated edition of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* merely increases our perplexity. Here, in landscape that is exclusively English, we find characters of two classes, aged tenders of the flock quite miserably tattered and torn, and elegant youths in sombreros and tight hose, who swagger about swinging hooks eight feet long, and pressing laurel wreaths on one another's foreheads. Meanwhile, men who are not shepherds, but just contemporary peasants, are making hay, walking in procession to church, reaping corn, or mending bagpipes. So that here is at once expressed that inconsistent Elizabethan attitude regarding the pastoral, which animates all the writers of the time and finds in *England's Helicon* its choicest selection. The poets go back to Sicily, and yet remain in Sussex, paying a long visit to Italy on the road. They mingle a fantastic idealism which goes vaguely back to Theocritus through Sannazaro, with an attempt at rustic realism which is grotesque. The result is a strange inconsistency, a mixing of scenery and images, a delicate truth of description beside what is merely queer and forced. Robert Greene, who cuts a fine figure in *England s Helicon*, is inspired to write:

> When tender ewes, brought home with evening sun,
> Wend to their folds,
> And to their holds
> The shepherds trudge when light of day is done.

and then
(a warning to such as try to be funny in pastoral):—

> Thy lips resemble two cucumbers fair,
> Thy teeth like to the tusks of fattest swine;
> Thy speech is like the thunder in the air;
> Would God thy toes, thy lips, and all were mine.

The impetus to the lyrical outburst for which the latter part of Elizabeth's reign was so remarkable, dates back to 1557, when there appeared that epoch-making book, *Tottel's Miscellany*, more properly called, "Songs and Sonnets written by the Right Honorable Lord Henry Howard, late of Surrey, and other." The publication of this work proclaimed the dawn of another period. It was "the treasury into which was garnered the earliest lyrical harvest in England." In the years that followed the publication of this work, poets continued to write until Eng-

land became indeed, "a nest of singing birds." English scholars and courtiers brought the lyric back to their native land, and it was among them that it flourished. They combined in it qualities derived from their study of the classics, and from their interest in Continental poetry, a poetry needed to stimulate and gladden English song; above all, they infused into their poems a genuine English feeling and manner of thought. All this gave an impulse of golden life to English poetry, and in the hands of Elizabethan poets the impulse quickened, for they gathered together the freshness of Chaucer, the dignity of Virgil, and the elaborate color of Petrarch and Ariosto and blended them into a poetic language that was noble, firm and musical. Poetry still exists in spite of faulty texts, doubtful authorship and the like weapons, which should be used to defend literature, but not to beat it.

FRAGMENTS

By Jean Mitchell Lawrence

Eyes of a dog, true and tender,
Looking with trust into mine.
Innocent grace of a kitten
Playing with a tangle of twine.
Nose of a horse, so like velvet,
Soft to the touch of my hand.
Children at play by the seaside,
Brown little limbs on the sand.
First early breath of the springtime
Melting the snow and sleet
Wagons with gay-colored flowers
Bright'ning the drab of the street.
Marvelous hues of a sunset,
Glorifying all of the sky,
Moments alone with the ocean,
Far away ships sailing by.
These are the things I have woven
Into the woof of my life,
Making a song of my heart-throbs,
Calming the hurt and the strife.

MATTHEW BELOVED

" - Matthew is in his grave, yet now here
Methinks I see him stand
As at that moment, with a bough
Of wilding in his hand."
W. Wordsworth

By Stanley Kauffmann

I

Beneath the lofty, heaven-pointing tower,
The great bell roused itself; it lurched and rang,
And drunkenly it tolled the holy hour.
"Ding-dong! Oh, sinners, pray!" the great bell sang;
And as it rocked, it quivered through and through,
Knowing full well what good their prayers would do.

The little town was sleeping in the sun,
The sleep that only comes on Sunday morn,
When each man knows another week is done,
And thinks how they have slipped since he was born,—
And since the chasm has become so deep,
He turns and tries to get some more sweet sleep.

But the rude ringing will not be denied;
It echoes off the great encircling hills
And rolls on down the valley, high and wide,
As does a wave that thunders out and spills
On to the shore, a strong arm of the sea,
And then flows back content and peacefully.

Most, when they heard the sound, were quite annoyed;
Religion shouldn't interfere with sleep.
Some few, the older ones, were overjoyed;
A prayer to them was something sweet and deep.
Some other few were glad; these were young men,
For in the church they saw their girls again.

The village rose and dressed itself with care.
Its vainness was its only conscious sin.
It was quite proud of what it had to wear,
And picked and chose the clothes to see God in.
Folk liked the walk to church, to hear the rustle
Of new-pressed trousers and the silken bustle.

By twos and threes, they came now down the street,
A sombre caravan that slowly grew.
The careful steps of many prosperous feet
Displayed the newest and the richest show.
The poorer ones, behind, affixed their eye
On what their hearts desired but could not buy.

By twos and threes they turned into Church Lane,
The haughty fathers and their aping sons,
And mothers who had lost their pride with pain,
The humble and the rich-deserving ones.
The great bell rang; the air resounded clear.
None understood who heard, but had to hear.

The minister was waiting at the door.
He was a young man for the awful task
Of teaching greed it must not ask for more
And answering questions only children ask.
For six years he had argued and explained,
And wondered whether he had lost or gained.

His name was Clifford Eakins: and he thought,
"It isn't bad, a name like that, for me.
It has the modest dignity I ought
To have, and quiet as my name should be."
He thought this as he met his people there
And bade them welcome to their weekly prayer.

The inside of the church was hushed and dim.
Men left their conversation at the door
And walked shamefacedly in front of Him
Whom they had come, by custom, to implore.
He who loves the singing, joyful noise
Must smile at prayers that foolish Man employs.

The earth is never quiet: day or night
Some bird is happy or some insect calls:
The wind makes little saplings sigh with fright:
There is no ceasing in the waterfalls;
But Man has hushed the place where he would pray
And shuts out, too, the sunlight of His day.

The minister read briefly, then they rose
And sang a hymn; the puny organ squealed.
And when all other business reached its close,
Poor Clifford swallowed hard three times and steeled
Himself to speak. He preached almost an hour
Directly underneath the high bell-tower.

And as he spoke, he looked from time to time
To where his wife sat on the center aisle.
She was so fresh and healthy-looking: "prime"
Is what he called her; he saw her smile.
He talked on "Giving Freely in this Life"
And wondered if he really loved his wife.

He reached his "lastly," and he saw again
The smug content of nearing Sunday dinner
Come o'er the faces of the paunchy men,
And on the fat men's wives, who were much thinner,
He saw belief that they had done their duty.
"Oh, God," he thought, "they know not of your beauty.

"They have not glimpsed the penetrating Mind
That molds the thoughts of all our little ways,
Nor felt the blesséd Kiss, so cruel-kind,
That sweetens all our lives. Lord, in my days,
Give me the faith to make my flock believe."
He saw his congregation sigh and heave.

He ended; and they sang another hymn,
This time more lustily than at the first.
The smile on Eakins' face was thin and grim.
"They're happy now that they have passed the worst;
Now they are free to gorge and sleep all day."
He wished that they would quickly go away.

And so they did. He walked home with his wife
And wondered why he always felt ashamed.
God, every Sunday morning of his life
Was this to happen: his bosom sore inflamed,
And feeling only that his life was spent
In teaching beasts a human sacrament?

He cast a shy glance at his wife; she seemed
Remote and distant, miles far from his side,
A phantom woman he had only dreamed.
This stranger could not really be his bride.
She smiled; he smiled at her, and wondered
If she guessed each week how he plunged and blundered.

"Dear, you were fine today," she said at last.
He shrugged and said, "Oh, I got through all right."
"There was a fine collection when they passed
The plate." He wished somehow he might
Tell her the burning things that pressed his mind;
Naomi was secure and sweet and kind.

They passed the Corner Store and walked ahead
Until they reached their house, cream-white and brown
And fronted by a single flower-bed.
It was the neatest dwelling in the town.
"Naomi likes the little place," he thought;
"But does she know the pain with which 'twas bought?"

They turned in at the gate; he held it wide.
Naomi walked through gracefully and sure.
A sudden pain, so sharp he almost cried,
So harrowing his heart could not endure,
Gripped Eakins as he watched his lovely wife.
She was the beauty of his little life.

He saw it as she passed him at the gate,
What he had never clearly seen before:
That, in the strange imaginings of Fate,
She had been sent, a creature to adore
Forever and to worship and to praise.
She was the light and blessing of his days.

She walked on up the path; he heard a car
And turned to see a flivver rattle by.
Old Mrs. Peaslee waved at him afar.
"How do," she called, a twinkle in her eye.
He mustered all the smile he could arouse,
Then turned and quickly walked into the house.

Old Mrs. Peaslee turned back in her seat.
"Irene," she said to someone at her side,
"Don't you think parson's wife is just too sweet.
I mind when she was just a blushin' bride."
Irene replied, "Well, sure as I'm a-thrivin,'
We'll leave the road ef you don't mind yer drivin!"

"What's it to you if she is sweet or not?
A widder like myself is all you are,
And one old tabby's all the kin you've got,
So you just keep your eyes right on this car,
Or if you don't, I'll get me out an' walk.
At least, I won't hear any moonin' talk."

Old Mrs. Peaslee chuckled. "One old cat
Is all the kin I've got, eh? There you're wrong.
I've got a nephew, ma'am." Irene said, "Scat!"
"I have! An' he'll be comin' here along
About next week to see his old relation.
Just finished college. Needs a short vacation."

"Well, I swan," Irene said slowly, "well!"
And took a breath before she spoke again.
"It seems a pity you can't never tell
Your friends a thing—especially 'bout men.
How old is he? And where's he from?", she said.
"He's twenty-one, I think, and city-bred.

"Just graduated as an engineer;
He's all set now to go out buildin' things.
He's mighty handsome, too, or so I hear.
Been in his share of whirligigs and flings."
Irene sighed peacefully. "Well, ain't that nice?
What's his name, now?" "Matthew. Matthew Price."

II

Naomi saw her face smile from the glass,
And wondered why she felt lead-dull inside.
She raised her thin white hand and let it pass
Over her cheek; and then she felt it glide
Down her neck and under her firm breast,
And on her beating heart, her small hand pressed.

Oh, she was very young to be thus caught,
A helpless prisoner, yet kindly chained:
To know within herself that she was bought
And owned for all her life; what else remained
When one impatient soul was seized by Fate
And married to a man she did not hate?

But love! Naomi smiled deep at the word
And clasped her body that was Honor's wife.
When she was young, what singing she had heard,
What gorgeous, dazzling patterns colored life!
And now the youthful singer had reached thirty,
And felt inside that she was worn and dirty.

She glanced around the room; how drab and plain
It was: the wooden bed, the rug of brown.
Ah, what a crying deal of hungry pain
When she had come here, to this little town,
To be beloved by someone kind and good,
But whom she never loved nor never could.

Oh, how they laughed when she had told them that.
"Why, he's a minister," they said, "and clever.
And he's not ugly, nor is he old nor fat;
Besides, you know, a girl can't wait forever."
So she had married him, not knowing why,
And though she was adored, oft wished to die.

Poor Clifford! She knew his was a hard lot, too.
His heart was full of things she could not share;
And though he never told her aught, she knew
The bitterness each Sunday made him bear
Because his work was never to be done.
But he had her and God; she had no one.

Naomi smiled again and brushed her hair.
This was the usual and expected way.
She would pause gracefully on the lowest stair,
And, "You're growing prettier," he would say;
And as she felt her youthful heart's-blood thicken,
She would sit down to biscuits and roast chicken.

And so it happened; so they talked and sat,
A husband and a wife, yet of no kin.
A meal to her was an enormous vat
She poured unmeaning conversation in;
And while he wondered if she knew his mind,
She understood, and tried hard to be kind.

When dinner wore away and reached an end,
He asked her, as he always did each week,
To play for him. She did; it helped to mend
The broken sentences she could not speak.
He thought she played magnificently well:
She knew it bad, but liked the music's spell.

Ah, that was love—those three descending chords,
And then the ripple that flowed merrily;
And all the happiness that life affords
Was in that short, three-noted melody.
Men have no right to taunt us with such sounds
When all about the earth, despair abounds.

Those chords again. O glorious, shining light,
Search out my heart and kiss it with your balm.
From pit of darkness, lift me—make me bright;
For tempest and for torment, give me calm.
The cherub-driven chariot rolled away.
He said, "That's fine. I like to hear you play."

She smiled and said, "I ought to practise more."
He beamed: "Your playing's good enough for me."
Then he went to his study, shut the door.
Another smile. Two tears came out to see
Her pretty face. She sat quite still a while,
And then she read, but never ceased to smile.

III

Matthew packed his bag the night before,
And slept but restlessly until the morn.
Within his mind, he heard the river's roar
And smelled the perfume of the ripening corn.
These would not let him sleep. He prayed for day
The night before he was to go away:

He'd done so ever since he was a child.
He laughed that he was still impatient thus,
And had not learned that Time is not beguiled
By hasty love to hurry on for us.
And so he turned and tossed the whole night through,
And heard the breath of wind and saw the dew.

When Matthew woke, the city was gray-slate.
The milk-carts rattled on the cobbled street;
And tipsy fellows who had been out late
Walked stumblingly towards home on foolish feet.
The trolley-cars were rumbling into life:
The janitor was scolding at his wife.

The air was close and used and stale,
As if but lately from some other lung.
The city and the sky showed sickly pale;
There was no joy about them, nothing young:
And Matthew chuckled at the street's dark frown;
It made him gladder, then, to leave the town.

With one quick, eager leap, he left the bed
And smote his shoulders a resounding whack,
Then, looking in the mirror, scratched his head,
And laughed until he thought his ribs would crack.
Oh! twenty-one was very good to be,
And to be leaving all this misery!

As he dressed, he saw a swallow fly
And marked the coloring of his little throat;
He turned his head and saw the small lark high,
Skimming on his new-born, quivering note.
He laughed again, and let his fingers pass
Over the bureau top to touch the grass.

It was not long before he left his room
And shut the door behind him with relief.
The maple-tops would be the purging broom
To cleanse his leaping heart of city grief;
And, bag in hand, he boarded a green trolley,
Thinking the while, "The water must look jolly."

As Matthew jogged along, the city woke
And gray-faced men and women left their beds.
In all their tired mouths, not one tongue spoke,
Not one dream flashed in all their beaten heads;
And Matthew laughed: "I'm leaving you, poor sheep.
I'm leaving dirt and dust and life-in-sleep."

So cruel is youth, exulting in the sun,
And drinking in the vigor of its blood,
And doing what should never have been done,
And what the old ones never understood,
So busy is it that it oft forgets to pity;
Thus Matthew laughed at those left in the city.

The railroad terminal soon loomed ahead,
A giant temple, large and frightening,
Bloated-looking, somehow, overfed.
He chuckled inwardly: "Hey, hollow thing!
I'm going to take a train from you today;
And you'll be standing here when I'm away."

As Matthew walked across the echoing floor,
He thought of four years he had been in college,
The long nights spent in hammering at the door
Of sly, elusive, and heart-tingling knowledge.
For four years he had borne the steady strain;
And now the country lay within that train.

He thought that it would never start; it did,
And Time, though it moves slowly, moves secure.
The train, with an enormous breathing, slid
Down the platform, easily and sure.
Matthew's nostrils quivered: he sank back
And listened to the wheels caress the track.

The platforms, freight cars, baggage dray,
Tunnels, switches, slipped away.
The city buildings lost their height
And let down more of Heaven's light.
The train pulled eagerly ahead,
And little towns of white and red,
With shutters newly painted green,

Flashed by the windows, looking clean.
And Matthew felt surprise, somehow,
At seeing suddenly a cow,
So cool, complacent, and so dull,
"But, oh," he thought, "how natural;
And all the years that I have spent
In searching Learning's testament,
At planning bridges, drawing rudders,
She has passed in filling udders
And giving steaming milk and cream
In one warm, happy, hissing stream.
And she has known no pain nor ache;
She saw each glorious morning break,
And saw the bushes fade and bud,
And wondered not, but chewed her cud."

The train rolled on. He felt a thrill
When far away he saw a hill,
And wondered if the farmers knew
Why, in the distance, hills are blue.
He longed to touch the shining green
And see what hills wear to be seen.
The train went 'round a curve and took
Him over a pearl-studded brook.
He briefly smelled the dampish air
That told him there was fishing there
And hurried on. He heard the whistle
And marked a fully-flowered thistle.

All of a sudden he saw the sky
And stifled in his throat a cry
Of patient wonder, for the whole
Was an inverted porcelain bowl
Of wondrous blue, with snowy white
Arranged in patterns of delight,
So high and great, he felt he must
Leap from the train and kiss the dust
That gave him birth to see these sights,
To smell these precious days and nights.
He recognized new things each mile,
The elm-tree's shape, the daisy's smile,
And knew that much as he had kept

Within his heart, yet much had slept,
Only to be awaked again
By Man's own earth and earthy men.

He rode and rode, and deeper blue
The heavens turned, as if they knew
The eyes that fastened on their course.
He laughed to see a wise old horse
Nibbling by a barn-yard gate,
Humble and simple, and yet sedate.
"Old friend," he felt like shouting loud.
But then he saw a burnished cloud,
And wondered if the years of living
Were long enough to take this giving,
To take the blue and green and gold,
And ere you'd seen the rest, grow old.
"Oh, God," he whispered, "give me life.
Make Earth my mother and my wife;
And when I come at last to rest,
Press me against her warm, deep breast
For cleanliness," he added last.
The train came down the mountain fast.

Now all about him settled peace,
An infinite feeling of release,
Of leaving far-off and behind
Unhappiness and doubt of mind,
And knowing as the train advanced
And small things held his eyes entranced,
That once again he should know breath
Untainted with the fear of death,
That here where God to Man unfurled
The simple mystery of the world,
There was no room for qualm or doubting,
Only exulting deep and shouting.
So Matthew Price, the engineer,
In every stream saw God more clear.

And then without a second's warning,
The train gave vent to steamy yawning,
And slowed down with a little shriek,
Then stopped and shook, as if 'twere weak;

And Matthew got off and was kissed
And told how much he had been missed.

The flivver rattled homeward merrily.
Old Mrs. Peaslee talked and talked and talked.
He made short answers and strained his eyes to see
The hidden places where he once had walked.
He could not yet believe that he was there;
He clasped his knee and drank deep of the air.

The country sounds now poured into his ear:
The cricket's evening hum, the phoebe's call,
The yellow finch's pretty cry of fear,
The farmer's "Co' boss!", the calf's hungry's bawl.
All these wove magically a web of sound
That bound his hungry heart close with the ground.

She drove the car into an ancient shed
That smelled of hay long harvested and gone.
He looked around; his aunt laughed loud and said,
"I guess you see the old place ain't changed none."
"That's why I like it," he replied. "Must be.
Nothin' changes here, not even me."

Her house was old and rickety, but clean.
She showed him to his room beneath the eaves,
And tapping at the window could be seen
A few old branches proud of their young leaves.
They ate their supper, had a little talk,
Then Matthew lit a pipe and took a walk.

The moon was almost full; it glowed on him
As one long mourned for, glad of his return,
And though the light was little more than dim,
He saw along the road the maiden-fern.
He plucked a piece and stroked it as he gazed
Down where the village lights were mist-enhazed.

Unreal it was; each moment he expected
To wake and look at city roofs again.
And rise and see his tired feet directed
Along the worn-out paths of worn-out men.
But no: the dream stayed on so long and true
It fashioned into life, as long dreams do.

He sat and smoked until his pipe went out.
He knocked it on a stone and slowly rose,
And smiled aloud there as he looked about—
Then walked home, smelling elderberry blows.
And from his bed not over a short mile,
Love and life were slumbering the while.

IV

This is the story of how these two met,
No one of them foreseeing,
Yet Time and Fate agreeing;
The actors were ready, the scene was set.

And all of a woven chain of chances,
Undreamed in mortal knowing
Yet slow and sure a-growing,
Are makers and breakers of our romances.

There is not in Nature an act of haste.
To us it seems fast fleeting,
The shy glance and the meeting,
But it has been planned without hurry or waste.

And we who are puppets to work out the scheme,
Our full joy lies in going
With great faith, and unknowing,
To live out our life and to dream out our dream.

He had been picking berries all the day
And found himself upon the mountain-top,
Where, mixed with many tree-smells, was the hay,
Some tardy farmer has gathered for his crop.
The near-full pail lay opposite his chin;
The proud sun was reflected in the tin.

The glory of the earth was 'round his head,
The lovely testament of simpleness.
He twined his fingers in the grassy bed
And watched the heavens' light grow less and less.
This was the life God meant us all to know.
Why else would cities plague the true heart so?

Then suddenly he heard a little noise,
The rustling of a leaf, a broken stick.
Such little overture swift Fate employs
Before she binds our bare hearts close and quick.
He turned and saw her, knowing, then, the token
Of Destiny that is not to be broken.

Love is not fevered kisses nor warm sighs,
The throbbing pulse, the forehead burning hot:
It is the light that lets us realize
The past thought rich and full, was sadly not;
That future is bound up in brown silk hair.
So Matthew felt when he first saw her there.

He looked so much a piece of her dear earth,
The mixture of the red sky and the sun,
A body that the soil had given birth,
(And animate dust and wind is everyone),
She had stood watching till he turned his head,
And with a soft glance, raised her from the dead.

She blushed a little and thought hard to say
A little thing to tell him she was clever.
He said "Hello" in such a quiet way
She knew this moment would be all Forever.
"Hello," she answered, and in turn he knew
His future hung on what those lips would do.

"Won't you sit down?" he asked; "there's room to spare."
She laughed—she had not laughed aloud for long—
And sat down near him, trying not to stare
At him, to still the tears that seemed to throng
Within her throat. "These blackberries are good,"
He said; "will you take some?" She said she would.

They did not speak of what was in their breasts.
They told their names and who they were and all;
And as the color of the rose attests
The bathing in the sun, the raindrop's fall,
So, in their eyes, which glistened as they spake,
Light glowed to show that deep love was awake.

I cannot tell how such things come to be,
Why, from a million souls, Fate picked these two
To meet and pledge eternal company,
And wove their paths to make the plan come true;
I say, I cannot tell, but meet they did,
And fused their lives, as silent Fate had bid.

She did not tell him then that she was wed,
(She left her ring at home when she went berrying),
And though nice, pleasant things were all he'd said,
She knew his heart already thought of marrying,
And wished she had the strength to tell the truth,
But, oh, so long since she had tasted youth.

And so with simple words, they fanned a flame
From out a glowing accidental spark,
And quite forgot the world from which they came
Until she noticed it was growing dark.
They rose and walked together down the hill.
Their hearts were talking though their lips were still.

She would not let him see her home, but left
Him at the road and quickly walked away.
He felt at once enrichéd and bereft,
Having her promise that on the next clear day,
He would find her upon the mountain-top.
He thought his pounding heart would never stop.

When he reached home at last, his aunt exclaimed,
"Why, Matthew, boy, I thought you'd never come."
He stopped her with a kiss. "Why, ain't you 'shamed?"
She blushed. "The supper's done. I've saved you some."
She took the berry-pail. "Now, tell me true,
Have you been eatin' these?" He smiled. "A few."

V

Now, godlike, come and look with me
Down where two little humans sleep,
Dreaming sweet and dreaming deep
Of love and love's humility.

Two bodies, scarce a mile apart,
One fresh and young, and one forsworn
Yet newly touched and newly born:
This is the power of the heart.

Oh, eager ones there in the night,
Despair not in your sleep,—dream on.
The flame of youth is quickly gone
And age is cold and weak delight.

This love—this warm and fleshly yearning—
It is the mark of God made clear,
That these two souls He holds more dear,
And sets within their breasts this burning.

This dream called Life—what is its stuff?
It is not gain nor strife nor greed,
Nor getting what our bellies need:
This is not all—nor near enough.

What else remains for struggling Man
To hallow here his earthly days
But love and comfort, love and praise,
To know that what He wills, He can?

And marking here our little earth,
The God who lives about, above
Has sent to us the gift of love,
And love it is that gives us birth.

And love, too, molds our way of life,
For one man prays his grave were turned
Because his offered love is spurned,
And each man's fate rests with his wife;

And who shall say that human love,
Begot of passion and the flesh,
Is not a sacred thing and fresh,
Bequeathed and blesséd from above?

For out of arms and breasts and thighs,
And lying sweet and lying deep
With love in holy bridal sleep,
From such a bed shall God arise.

So, lovers fated, dream—dream on.
God is the only marriage-priest,
And for His faithful sets the feast,
And shall do, when our bones are gone.

Then wonder not the wrong or right.
Love blesses all our blood and breath:
It is our triumph over Death,
O lonely sleepers in the night.

VI

The morning sun was warm and bright and clear.
Matthew had tried his best to read till noon;
Naomi's voice still sounded in his ear
And whispered that they would be meeting soon,
And since her soft, warm voice was all he heard,
His eyes moved on but never read a word.

Then lunch was ready. Matthew ate his fast,
And Mrs. Peaslee shook her head. "Sakes, boy,
We ain't got much; you'd better make it last.
'Chew slow', my father said, 'an' you'll enjoy
Your food'. Peach pie or apple—take your choice."
He ate his pie and heard Naomi's voice.

As he dried the dishes for his aunt
And as she chattered unimportant things,
He wondered how one face could come to haunt
A man so quickly with the pain love brings.
He had known girls—kissed many, slept with some,
But, oh, the light that dazzles all men dumb!

The dishes were stacked high; he wiped his hands,
Then lit a pipe and looked out at the sky.
His aunt said, "You ain't said a word, boy. Lands,
But there's a mighty queer look in your eye."
He laughed and reassured her; then he left,
And as he walked, he felt his heart was cleft.

Clifford smiled at her and said, "Why, yes,
Dear, I don't mind if you go for a walk.
I'll be at church ' most all the day, I guess;
I have to write that Tuesday evening talk,
Or else I'd go with you." He kissed her cheek,
And in her breast, her blood was chill and weak.

She went upstairs and washed and changed her clothes,
Then combed her hair out, long and soft and brown,
While from its silken strands a scent arose,
So warm and natural, like turf on th' down.
She brushed it slowly, thinking, "Now I know
Why I have never cut it, let it grow."

She bound it up with motions neat and deft,
And crowned her head with this dark shining mass.
She pinned it fast, and then before she left,
She took one last look quickly in the glass.
No, she was not too old and not too late;
She walked downstairs and slowly closed the gate.

There was a short cut past Potato Spring
That led her off the road, behind the town,
And once upon it, she slipped off her ring,
(Smelling again her laundered wedding-gown):
"This is not wrong in me; oh, is it, God?
God, this is false; the boy is grass and sod."

The sun draped warmly 'round her neck and back.
She walked with firm, sure strides along the lane,
And thought that yesterday on this same track,
Her heart had known no lightness, only pain.
"My name's Naomi: I am happy, Lord.
Oh merciful, kind God, be Thou ador'd."

And soon the path ran up along a brook.
Forget-me-nots were dotted on its side.
She looked and stopped, and bending, nimbly took
A sprig of these shy blues that seek to hide.
The almond scent arose from them; she smelled
It as she walked; her courage welled.

She knew he would be there; she knew; she knew;
Or why then would the cool brooklet tell her so?
The pleasant summer breezes e'er speak true;
They whisper only what they see and know,
And they said he was there. Sweet summer wind,
Before so empty, now so good and kind.

She climbed and climbed. The path was straight and steep
And left her breathing rapidly and hard;
Then suddenly it leveled, checked its sweep,
And there ahead she saw the broad greensward.
He leaned against an oak—her heart's one pride—
And watched her as she walked up to his side.

So many things that he had planned to say,
So many answers she had in her brain.
Then suddenly they knew that, on this day,
Talk would be wasteful, laughter only pain;
So, without speaking,—oh, strange, his eyes were wet
And hers were bright and shining—their warm lips met.

The first kiss is the sweetest and the best.
"I shall remember this until I die,"
Thought he, "—this first warm kiss—and all the rest
Will be a search for this felicity;
And if I never find it, Death's embrace
Will mind me of this time I touched her face."

They parted, breathlessly and soft and slow,
Knowing now what never need be said.
"Naomi," he whispered, forehead all aglow,
And "Dearest" she breathed, stroking his head.
They did not kiss again, but sat them down;
He smelled the warm scent of her hair's rich brown.

Close by they sat—there, high upon the hill,
Surrounded by the guardian knowing trees,
She staring at him, as fond women will,
He wondering how one short kiss could squeeze
And grip his heart; and as they worshipped there,
The hill spilled her perfumes into the air.

"Here," he said, "it's right for you and me—
The soft turf and the rolling, open sky;
And all the vastness of infinity
Around us and about us seems to lie."
"It's big," she said, "and free." This earthly tomb
Had suddenly become to her a womb

From whose dark, hopeful depths there might arise
A future golden, fashioned by this boy,
Or—oh, the trusting wonder in his eyes—
A life in coldness, barren of bright joy.
It hung on telling him the truth; she caught
Her breath and thought of home. She uttered naught.

"I've been about," he said at last, "but never
Dreamed things as sweet as this could ever be.
If moments like this one could live forever,
Men wouldn't need a Heaven." "I can see
A mountain twenty miles away," she said.
He smiled and pressed his lips against her head.

They kissed again within that little grove,
And each kiss warmer than the fevered last.
He said, "I—I—Naomi, dear, I love
You." She said naught, but clasped him, held him fast,
And felt the throbbing pulses in his brow,
And thought, "I thank Thee, Lord, for sparing me till now."

Then far away she heard her own voice say
Softly, "Love me? But Matthew, Matthew, dear,
You haven't known me more than one short day."
He said, "Your silver voice is all I hear.
Your face and hair and lips—they own my mind.
Naomi—dearest, dearest sweet—be kind."

He pressed her, breathless, back against a tree.
Her full red lips were moist and quivering,
Her breast heaved gently; and he could not see
The earth or sky or sun, desiring
To be one with her and to taste the wine
That hot love has pressed out from passion's vine.

She turned her head and saw below the steeple
Where even now her husband sat and wrote;
And nameless fears and scurrilous, talking people
Reached out their clammy fingers 'round her throat.
She cried aloud—but why, she could not say—
And wanting his embrace, pushed him away,

Then lightly brushed his forehead with her lips
As she ran past him down the mountain-side;
And as the trembling-nostril'd swift deer slips
Noiselessly when noise frights him to hide,
So, ere he knew it, she had turned and gone,
Breaching their newly-promised unison.

He followed down the path and called her name;
She answered not, for she was out of hearing.
He called again, again no answer came.
The fever in his veins was past all bearing:
He stumbled homeward trying to forget
His gnawing heart—but still his cheeks were wet.

VII

On summer nights, when sky is clear,
The Maker of the earth draws near
And sees the labor of His hand,
The mountains, waters, and the land,
The valleys' green, the billows' white,
All covered o'er by gentle night.
Then, in His heart, He knows again
The dream He visioned once for men:
A race of strength and purity,
All dwelling in sweet amity,
With naught of hate or grief or greed,
With brother filling brother's need.
He knows again the dream He knew

Of men bareheaded, strong, and true..
Then He who holds us in His hand
Sees that which came of what He planned,
The struggle, selfishness, and war,
The thief, the murderer, and whore,
The petty vanities and lust,
With love, despiséd, in the dust.
He sees us living out our lives
With making miserable our wives,
And stealing other workers' gold,
And warping young and shaming old,
And that He does not, in His ire,
Cleanse out the earth with purging fire,
And crush the towers, raze the city,
Is proof of His abiding pity.

He smells the flowers He has made,
And these, though tongueless, can persuade
Him to forgive our vice and crime
And grant weak Man a little time
To learn the truth. The birds and trees,
The rolling rivers and the seas,
They pray for us; and God, He hears:
For though the Universe both fears
And serves the Lord who gave it birth,
He is most pleased with this our earth,
And for the sake of peak and glen,
He deals more kindly with us men.
Oh, I am glad the mighty Lord,
Who made the great sun at a word,
Is fond of our bright birds and flowers,
Our hills and streams and forest bowers,
And likes our winds and clouds and skies:
I could not love Him otherwise.

VIII

The next day was the Sabbath. Clifford went
To church alone that morning; on the way,
Mixed in his head with lines of Testament,
He saw how pale Naomi looked this day.
She wanted to come out; he thought it best
That she stay home for one Sunday and rest.

The Sabbath stillness was upon the town.
The beauty of the hills seemed audible.
He reached the church and slipped into his gown,
Old Frank, the janitor, began to pull
The bell-rope, swung apart the creaky doors.
Another week had run its fleeting course.

The bell rang out; the people dressed and came.
And Clifford smiled and greeted them again,
Trying so hard to love them in His name,
To think that they were simple, honest men:
While all the time, the Church Board winked and smirked
Watching how well their brilliant pastor worked.

He rose to preach when prayer and hymn were done.
The church leaned back to hear in waking sleep;
And, as he spoke, his thoughts began to run
On how Naomi's eyes looked clear and deep,
And how the butcher's bill had to be paid.
This paragraph! A good point he had made.

But what avail? Although their eyes looked up,
No one of them could hear a word he said.
He might as well pour water by the cup
On plants and flowers long since burned and dead.
Yes, one was listening—a man. He knew
Him not—the one in Mrs. Peaslee's pew.

Ah, those were good eyes that the young man had,
Open. keenly intelligent and bright,
Yet tinged by something far away and sad,
As if they had but lately looked on light
Too blinding and too strong for them to brook.
Ah, if his congregation had that look!

He preached to the young man for almost an hour,
Finished, clearing his throat, and then sat down.
They sang and left. The bell tolled in the tower,
And in the vestry room, he doffed his gown.
He walked home, answering those who asked about
His wife, and thought, "I must find that young man out."

At dinner, later, while his tea was cooling,
He told his wife about the new young man,
And thought he saw—or were his weak eyes fooling
Him—something glow behind her pale cheek's wan;
But soon again he saw them calm and white.
He heard her play and went inside to write.

Matthew's mind was fevered all the day.
He could not read nor sit nor sleep nor think.
His body felt compounded of dull clay,
His life was bound in chains, and on each link
"Naomi" was engravéd bold and clear.
Old Mrs. Peaslee said, "You're actin' queer."

So love, that is at last our only peace,
Affords us neither peace nor sleep nor rest,
Until consuméd souls find sweet release
In kisses and soft touches, breast to breast;
And while we swear our oaths and sigh and burn,
God waits, where we set out, for our return.

The Sunday afternoon, which always lags
Because the world leaves off its work and sleeps,
Pressed down upon the nobly-fashioned crags
And smothered over rolling flats and steeps
Until the twilight came, and the red sun
Sank to its rest, its labor being done.

Their supper finished, dishes dried,
Matthew took out his pipe and went,
Thinking the night might help to hide
The pain and shame of passion pent.

He walked and smoked; the evening sky
Was cold and wide and frightening.
The smallest tree seemed dark and high,
And stillness covered everything.

All leaves and flowers lost their hues
In this unreal, macabre light,
And earth was swathed in grays and blues
While waiting for the sombre night.

There was no moon, nor hope of one:
No star shone through the hanging clouds
Which, vantaging the absent sun,
Cloaked o'er the earth like funeral shrouds.

He shivered as he walked alone,
Although the air was damp and warm.
The wind spoke low, a gentle moan;
He knew the next day would see storm.

"If only she were here," he thought,
"To touch her and to see her face."
His bosom grew bechilled and taut
At visioning her body's grace.

"Tomorrow I will go to town
And knock at each door, till I find
The whispering mouth and hair of brown
That so have seized my heart and mind.

"Oh, girl, oh, girl!" he prayed aloud,
"Oh, lovely woman of the wood."
A lean fir pointed at a cloud.
He turned the road; and there she stood.

"Naomi!" It was really she,
No phantom that his brain had stirred.
She stroked his forehead tenderly:
"What you were murmuring—I heard."

"All night I did not close my eyes,
All day your voice within me stirred;
My throat is full of tears and sighs,
And what you said just now—I heard."

"But yesterday—why did you go?"
"Then—I was foolish—frightened, then.
Oh, how much wiser we can grow
With feeling pain again, again.

"The world's the world, for foul or fair.
I love you, Matthew: I'm not afraid."

(O God, who hears our silent prayer!)
"Don't go! Don't go!" he cried; she stayed.

IX

The clay that made the earth,
It made my flesh and bone.
The mother who gave me birth
Is grass and tree and stone:
And under the starlit heavens,
I make my way alone.

With south wind as my friend
And west wind as my hope,
A-struggling towards the end,
Down valley, over slope,
With singing on my journey,
I stumble, fall, and grope.
So strive I for tomorrow,
Not knowing why nor how:
The cup of joy and sorrow,
It is my portion now.
The infinite sad of twilight
Is bound upon my brow.

X

The sky, the next day, was all overcast,
But Naomi was gloriously light
To breathe and feel and laugh aloud at last!
Her happiness was not untinged by fright,
For well she knew such happiness is frail,
And love forgotten is an age-old tale.

She went to the piano, opened it,
And sat a moment, staring at the keys.
Here was her life, mute and uncherishéd,
Until the Hand, skilled in all harmonies,
Had touched her, and from her deepest soul
Brought music strangely rich and sweet and whole

Her fingers pressed a note; it sang alone,
Clear and uplifted, flying through the room.
Then one more, and another, till the tone

Was golden as the cloth of sunset's loom.
The notes spilled out; and Mozart came to say
What had been throbbing in her breast all day.

Over the birth-bed,
Small and white,
Teaching the new head
Earth's delight,
A bird sat piping,
"Ho, pink ear!"
A small bird piping
High and clear.

Over the love-bed,
Soft and deep,
Bringing the warm head
Peace and sleep,
A bird sat piping,
"Joy, hearts here!"
A small bird piping
Shrill and clear.

Over the death-bed,
Wide and old,
Morning the young head
Still and cold,
A bird sits piping,
"Hush! He sleeps here!"
A small bird piping,
Piping clear.

The melancholy shadow at the close,
It frightened her a little when she thought
How hard a blow it would be now to lose
The one dear jewel her hungry life had sought.
She would see Matthew on this very night;
She'd tell him everything and set it right.
She'd tell him: "Matthew, I am not unwed.
I have a husband whom I do not love.
Oh, Matthew, Matthew, I was nearly dead
When we met that first day there in the grove,
But seeing you and touching your strong hand,
It gave me life. Oh, do you understand?"

He would, he would; he loved her, and he would,
And Clifford, e'er considerate and kind,
Would let her go; surely he understood
That if another man filled heart and mind,
He had no right to keep her as his wife,
To watch her hating him and hating life.

With Matthew, oh, she saw a little place,
And flowers, many flowers, near the door,
And evenings spent in kissing his dear face,
And firelight casting shadows on the floor,
With everything content and sweet and mild.
Ah, Matthew! And perhaps, in time, a child!

"Tonight, then, Matthew, I will tell you all,
And we can go away, and some day wed:
Leave misery and pain beyond recall:
Love strews our path with petals far ahead;
And Clifford will be happier to know
That I will be a saved soul when I go."

She left the keyboard, glanced out at the sky.
All gray it was, mysterious and still,
As if there were a torrent stored on high,
Waiting the loud command to loose and spill.
Her heart beat strangely; suddenly, the rain
Dropped tearfully upon the window-pane.

Matthew pressed the scythe against the stone.
The wheel creaked as he pumped it with his foot
His uncle once had taught him how to hone
"To keep the dullness out and temper put."
The grinding echoed in the little shed.
Two swallows twittered far above his head.

Where was she now, and did she think of him?
Was she laughing? If he could only see!
The sky outside was darkening and grim.
How long, how long he had to wait to be
With her again. She had said, "Come at eight."
It was five now. Three hours more to wait.

All the meaning of his life and being
Seemed manifested now, and clear;
And all of his existence hung on seeing
Her whom love had taught him to hold most dear.
All of his years were lived to reach this one,
And now a gorgeous new life had begun.

It filled him full of curious, humble pride
To know that in this world, there was a heart
That cared for him alone; and Matthew sighed
To think how crawling Time held them apart.
Naomi! Life and laughter, life and love!
The raindrops pattered on the roof above.

The wind was whistling in the maple tree.
He tensed his foot and stopped the spinning wheel,
Poured out the water, and got up to see
The storm swirl through. The scythe's bright gleaming steel
Was in his hand. He stood in the doorway
And gazed up at the milling, dismal gray.

Pit-pat, pit-pat, the raindrops smote the ground.
Pit-pat, pit-pat, they fell against the shed.
Matthew smelled the air and looked around.
Old Tom Smith Mountain had gray wreaths 'round its head.
He smiled, and lifted up his head unto the skies
And dazzling silver poured upon his eyes.

It was the queerest storm folks e'er had seen;
One bolt of lightning, only, showed its face.
"Spent quick," said Stationmaster Tom McQueen;
"That bolt struck up near Mrs. Peaslee's place."
And so it had. Half in, half out the shed,
Young Matthew lay—burned black and still and dead.

The strong and graceful, lovely youthful form,
The proud head, and the eager, seeking eyes,
The parted lips but lately moist and warm,
The straight, firm legs that never would arise,
Inanimate earth from which the breath had fled,
Thus Matthew lay—burned black and still and dead.

No heartache more, no worry and no toiling,
No grasping after far-off, distant gold
That turns to lead for all our dirty moiling,
No crumbling, no decay, no growing old,
Brief life and briefer death, there, by the shed,
Young Matthew lay—burned black and still and dead.

She waited long that night beside the bend,
Forget-me-nots clasped in her trembling hand.
"He'll come, he'll come," she prayed. "It's not the end."
But, oh, he could not. She did not understand,
And as she left, she dropped there, petals rent,
Forget-me-nots with fragile almond scent.

XI

She never murmured when she heard,
She did not scream nor did she cry,
And no one heard her say a word
And no one saw her turn her eye;

And in the church, while Clifford prayed
That God might take the young man's soul,
She never moved nor shook nor swayed,
Nor when the bell began to toll.

They laid him in an open place,
Old Mrs. Peaslee weeping by,
With sun and rain upon his face,
Beseeching his belovéd sky.

All the folks they sighed and wept
That God had struck a young man down;
But back to the place one person crept
When all the rest had gone to town:

Straight to the newly mounded grave,
Slowly and stolidly she went.
A simple farewell gift she gave,—
Forget-me-nots with fragile scent.

The silent tears are slow to wash away,
But end they must, as all our sorrows do.
Black night is ever turning into day,
And faith will make the weak heart strong and true.
So Naomi, left piteously alone,
Learned humbly what was God's and what her own.

And, as soft nursing makes the flower grow,
So, thinking much of those three days of love,
The only three her barren life would know,
Increased them, till they stood, a fragrant grove
To shelter her from dust and dirt and slime.
Naomi lived in thinking of that time.

The light of those three days illumed her life
And kept her still immaculate and proud;
And Clifford thanked God often for his wife,
From whom there had been lifted late a cloud.
She seemed much happier now, more free and gay,
Not longing for the time to pass away.

So human destinies, unfold, unravel,
And none may know how threads will twist and twine,
But only that the path which all men travel
Leads ultimately to God's bread and wine,
And sitting there beneath His vineyard's shade,
Are old friends greeted, and are new ones made.

So Naomi lived trustingly and sure
That some day she would see his face again;
And Clifford swore she helped him to endure
His life, and counted himself blessed 'mong men.
The pitying God who pardons us and shrives,
He knows our worths and marks us out our lives.

And every summer when the hay is high,
And brooklets rill and trill among the hills,
And nimble sheep skip lightly through the sky,
And bees are jealous of the daffodils,
And bright cornflower impudently springs,
She walks along the mountain-road and sings.

Midsummer evenings she goes all alone
To the old burying-place outside of town,
And stops before a grave quite overgrown
With graceful leaves and tendrils, green and brown:
There stands she, but she does not weep nor pray,
Knowing that he would rather see her gay.

The only sound she hears is cricket's hum:
The only smell is dew upon the ground:
And so she knows he sees that she has come.
She smiles at him a moment—then turns round
And goes, leaving, as simple testament,
Forget-me-nots with fragile almond scent.

XII

The kiss is fleeting as the lips that give it:
The lustre of the eye is not for long:
The glory of this life and those who live it
Is not the close embrace, the flesh's sweet song;
The warm, quick pains that cannot be denied
Are all our love, and love is all our pride.

So, in between and round about the stars,
And underneath the sun and moon and sky,
The single mortal moment that Time bars
From greedy Death is that deep, silent cry
When two of us, poor, stumbling things and small,
Clasp hands, and feel our little hearts grow tall.

Oh Beauty, girt about with God's delight;
Oh burning Beauty of our groping earth!
Oh touch my song, great Beauty, bless it bright
With simple glowing notes of growth and birth;
And Love, that maketh all our days to shine,
Enduring after dust, be mine—be mine.

WHEN APRIL COMES

By Ruth Le Prade

I would be a nun
And wear a black dress,
Kneel at an altar
And all my sins confess;

I would walk sedately
All of my days,
Surely peace would come to her
Who kneels and prays;

I would pray at evening,
I would pray at dawn,
I would not remember
Happiness that's gone;

I would pray to all the Saints,
Blessed Mary too,
In my cloistered holiness
I'd never think of you;

I would not remember
All your bonny ways—
Surely peace would come to her
Who kneels and prays;

Through the autumn afternoons,
In my lonely cell,
I would read from holy book,
All my beads I'd tell;

Though the winter nights were long
I'd utter no complaints,
I would meditate and pray
Thinking of the Saints;

I would be a nun
And wear a black dress,
Kneel at an altar
And all my sins confess—

If only, only, April
Would never come again
To thrill me with its ecstasy
And break me with its pain!

But well I know when April comes
And all the birds awake,
And all the buds come laughing out,
Every vow I'd break.

I would let my black dress
Fall upon the floor,
I would loose my gold hair,
Open wide the door.

I would kneel no longer,
No more beads I'd tell,
(Ah, well I know that sins like these
Must damn the soul to hell!)

I would choose a far road
Flung across the dawn,
All my heart in flower
With the happiness that's gone.

I would sing a Gypsy song
Out beneath the moon.
I would sing a Gypsy song
To a Gypsy tune.

I would dance with truant feet,
No more beads I'd tell,
(Ah, well I know that sins like these
Must damn the soul to hell!)

I would choose a far road
Leading anywhere,
And pray to God and all the Saints
To find my Lover there!

FOUR POEMS

By Kathleen Sutton

INTERVAL IN A LIFE

He used to like twisting my hair
Over his finger. "Yellow," he said, "as straw."
But sometimes, saying no word, he would only stare
Into my eyes—and that way
I loved him best. I thought he saw
Beneath the laughter, thrust aside the clay,
And found me as I was—a little shy
And proud, too eager to intensify
The moment—yet so unafraid to die.

Was it my voice he loved,
Or the warm mouth that promised everything? . . .
I wonder what he thought it really proved,
That I had asked no reckoning,
Holding it as I did so very small
A part of me—so least of all.
I opened my eyes wider that he might see . . .
But all he said was, "Such a lovely gray!"
And kept twisting the ends of my hair carelessly
Over his finger . . . and soon he went away.

INEVITABLE ANSWER

Love, take my lips,
  Press from them burning wine
Of ancient fruit.—
  Not mine, not mine!
The jealous brain moans.
  Love, assume
More frugal leaven.—
  What of the bloom?
The young heart clamors.
  The petaled prayer?—
The body writhes
  In wild despair . . .

Love makes no choice,
  Nor heeds the separate call;
Love, being everything,
  Takes all.

HOLY HOUR

This is the holy hour; all earth is still,
Waiting with flowered breath approaching dusk.
The sun moves unrestrained upon the hill,
As shadows fall in tapestries of musk
And gracious cool about the altar stone . . .
The hearts of lovers delicately wed
Kneel in a silence blest by gods alone,
And pray for words that never have been said.

There are no vows to make this hour more real;
No rituals to lend a purer grace
To youthful ones whose faith will shyly place
Upon the heart's strange want a sacred seal,
And burn white candles till the night is done,
While mind and blood and soul flow into one.

BETWEEN TWO

So many contradictions one must bring
To words before the heart is solved! The small
Aversions of an austere reasoning—
The fleeting paganism that heeds the call
Of April blindly, eager for the whole—

Yet is there limiting experience,
One simple truth—except, perhaps, the soul—
Embracing in itself all time's suspense?

Except the soul? Perhaps there you are right—
Yet only Death can answer. We must live
(I know this now) not by a candle's light,
Or dazzling blaze of noon, but as we give
Ourselves as fuel to love's compelling fire
Shall we behold the seeking heart's desire.

FOUR TRIOLETS TO A GARDEN

By Ruth H. Ward

Only in spring my tulips grow
Standing so proud and tall
A flaming red and yellow row
Only in spring my tulips grow
Making a gala April show
Against the old stone wall
Only in spring my tulips grow
Standing so proud and tall.

Happy in summer dusk I lie
Earth clover-scented for my bed
Watching through quiet leaves the sky
When in warm summer dusk I lie
Here where my hollyhocks stand high
With fireflies swinging 'round my hea
Happy in summer dusk I lie
Earth clover-scented for my bed.

I love this soft November rain
That patters on our summer leaves
Although it sings a sad refrain
I love this soft November rain
Singing, "Goodbye—goodbye again"
It drips from the old farm-house eaves
I love this soft November rain
That patters on our summer leaves.

My garden on a winter night
Deep-blue shadowed by the moon
Each twig soft-blanketed from sight
My garden on a winter night
Glowing with ghostly fairy light
Is lovelier than in June
My garden on a winter night
Deep-blue shadowed by the moon.

THREE POEMS

By Reba Jane Tyson

EVEN THE DEEP SPRING GOES

There is nothing here for me;
The stars are lost.
Once there was peace in this,
But flowers dry up and scatter on the wind.
Have you not felt them brush against your face,
Their scent and color gone?

There is nothing here for me.
Try as you will
The deep clear spring will die,
The ferns it nourished wither on the rocks,
The deer stand silent, puzzled by the hush
Of singing water—gone.

ONLY A LITTLE LONGER

If we could hold the moment, hold the light
Only a little longer, keep our hands
White in the sun without the shadows moving
Over them slowly and the warmth destroyed;
If we could keep the wood thrush in the hollow
Longer, and never wake to know the hush,
The emptiness of dawn without his song
We might have wisdom then, we might have wisdom
But the leaves have flickered down, open to all
The secret places where the brown wings flew
Within the hollow.
If we yet could hold
Only a little longer, light on our hands.

DESOLATION

The clearest voices we have known grow silent,
Muffled, without cause, without our wish,
Without the words that hurt, the swift hand lifted.
(Has it been so with us? Has it been thus?)

There is a time when the corn grows tall and taller
Till the earth is drained and the heavy ears are pulled.
But there is a harvest then, there is a harvest.
(Where is our harvest? Where is our garnered grain?)

Voices dim and deaden without reason.
There is no purpose when the answer comes
No more, and desolation fills the silence.
(Has it been so with us? Has it been thus?)

MINUTIAE

By Louise Darcy

Not mountains or the sea,
Not wonders of the world.
I choose the blade of grass,
The bud close-curled.

Not the cataract,
Not the jungle maze,
But the brook that wanders
Where cattle graze.

From deep city canyons
Let huge girders rise
Shutting out the sun,
Pushing back the skies.

Woodsmoke for the chimney,
Fruit upon the bough
Please me more than grandeur
Real or fashioned now.

Let great liners plow
The ocean with their steel
While I sit and watch
The swallows wheel.

DAWN

By Dorothy Wilkey Frey

Where the shadows of the night
  Touch the light
    Of coming morn,

Rifted rainbows, trailing fair,
    Warn the air
      Of glory born:
Rose-etched banners, day's delight,
  Speed the flight
    Of a wistful moon;

Stars must yield their little glow,
  Dimmed must go,—
    Dawn cometh soon.

UNFAMILIAR QUOTATIONS

The very young men and the old are our hope. The middle-aged are hard and fast for existing facts.—*George Meredith.*

A cheerful temperament counts enormously for worldly success. *Joseph H. Choate.*

Human life is in two parts—the seen and the unseen; to make the two values balance is to fulfill both.—*Thomas Carlyle.*

The United States of America is a country where the people believe they can avert fate and postpone Doomsday by Act of Congress—*Thomas Carlyle.*

Oh, to get through the world without knowing too much of the cruelty of it.—*Willa Cather.*

The best way to change a bad law is to enforce it.—*U. S. Grant.*

Society would be incredibly admirable if each one of us should require of himself even a little less human charity than he demands of others.—*G. Clemenceau.*

The more men think the more wretched they will be.—*Voltaire.*

God made all men equal, but he did not oblige them to remain so.—*Barrett Wendell.*

It is easier to discover a new truth than to get it accepted.—*Lamarck.*

Friendships are humanities; they require to be nourished and cherished or they die.—*Anon.*

Judge none blessed before his death, for a man shall be known in his children.—*Ecclesiasticus.*

PLUTO MEDITATES

By Mary Willis Shelburne

As a fly is held in amber
Quiet, translucent,
One moment lies embedded in my thought;
Slow sun in slanting threads of gold
Across the chrysoprase of grass,
Flowers motionless, trees
Hushed and still.
On the cobalt pool lilies dream
Perhaps
Of dragonflies, skimming on shining wings.

Lovely interlude of time, captured
And frozen in perpetual beauty,
Yet but the setting, delicately wrought
For you,
Lying with your arms outflung,
Eyes closed,
And all the tender melting lines
Of your young body
Molded in utter grace
Like rosy marble in the setting sun.

Proserpine, I go
To that dark kingdom, sadly now I go
To watch the weary months
Pass one by one.
Yet looking, I shall only see
This golden moment, when I cannot stay;
I take it with me for remembering
You
Until you come again.

FOUR POEMS

By Stanton A. Coblentz

REMINISCENCE

Once, in my greenest adolescent days,
I sought, in callow faith, to make a rhyme
On human virtues, which I called "sublime
As stars above," and hailed with stilted praise.
Since then, I've followed many-branching ways,
And seen vice coiling in the glare and grime
Of humid shops, and viewed the mould, the slime
Under high domes that pomp and honor raise.
Yet when, amid the world's red stormy din,
I almost have despaired of Adam's race,
Sometimes the mood of cloudless youth returns,
And through all sneaking greed and cobwebbed sin
I glimpse in man that light whose dwelling-place
Is love to which the eternal cosmos yearns.

VISIONS

I dreamt of genie palaces and ruby-hung renown.
But a voice said, "Gilt and fustian! Come, strike those bubbles down!"
So, turning from pearled minarets, jade bowers of Cathay,
I let a deed consume the dream, and hastened on my way.
I dreamt of moated castles with a Launcelot at the gate,
And I that gallant guardian whom the poets celebrate.
But a voice said, "Chaff of fancy!"; and, back on a street of gray,
I let a deed consume the dream, and hastened on my way.

I dreamt of night-adventures in a domed abyss of stars,
And many a silvered Venus and red, incredible Mars,
But a voice said, "Pale mirages!"; and, treading the dear, known clay,
I let a deed consume the dream, and hastened on my way.

I dreamt of a myriad phantoms that fled as the meteor flies,
Leaving me faintly sighing, to gaze upon earthly skies . . .
Until, in last bright visions, passing beyond the day,
I let a deed consume the dream, and hastened on my way.

METEORITE

This iron splinter hurtled from the sky
In a red gleam of terror, may have borne
The dust of dateless towers, long since gone,
In worlds for eons blotted from the eye.
It may have watched life's generations fly,
Seen warriors wheel and pass, and lords in scorn
Trample bleak slaves, and bludgeoning empires worn
By strike, and slowly crumple, sink, and die.

Here, from the starry shores of time it drops,
To merge its being with the swallowing earth,—
Ash of a conflagration ages past,
Spawn of the cyclic change that never stops,
By which all death, all ruin is re-cast
To build new fires, and give new seedlings birth.

WE MET AGAIN

We met again in dream, who had not met
Since more than twenty autumns burnt and died,—
She whom no breathing partner had descried
Through all these years of memory and regret.
Deep in that slumber-realm where none forget
The ancient loss that dust and daylight hide,
We journeyed through the dimness side by side,
Like two that never had been parted yet.

But not the rapture I would yearn to feel,
Finding a long-lost mother, filled my breast.
Some eerie brooding sorrow clasped its seal
Upon me, and I roved in mute unrest,
Touched by what spirit-pang, what grief that pressed
On one faint-winging where the star-mists reel?

HALF A LOAF

By Peggy Kniskern James

"Oh, half a loaf," they glibly say,
Is better than no bread at all."

I wonder if they know, who speak so wise
The heart's deep longing for the measure full!
The loaf—the bread of mutual love, and sacrifice,
Its texture fine in confidence, in trust, in common joy.
The satisfying feel of being first
With that one soul in all this earth
Who has the power to fil my utmost need.

Just half a loaf! A crumb, in kindness given—
A tender word, a touch, a token small,
A sign that my devotion is accepted
By that dear one who holds my heart in thrall.

Yes, half a loaf is fare enough—for starving men.

IN ALL FAIRNESS

By A. S. Johannesson

I cannot blame you for our love adventure,
When wittingly I lured you to my bower.
As well subject the roving bee to censure
For sipping proffered honey from the flower.
I made a subtle cage, with woman's wiling,
And set ajar the inward-swinging door,
(Its stubborn hinge had later need of filing,
With cruel words, that you might fly once more.)
Though darkness hears my pillow muffled sobbing,
And rank humiliation galls my pride,
The heart which you returned, with thanks, keeps throbbing
With memories that will not be denied.
I gambled recklessly with Fate—and lost.
But oh! it was a lovely coin I tossed.

THREE POEMS

By Mildred Boie

FROZEN NOW

A bitter wind blows through her heart,
And all her hopes lie frozen now
Whose love, too stormy from the start,
Has struck the blossoms from the bough.

The wind can veer and taste the south,
The earth once more grow warm and young,
And storms be laid in rain or drought,
But not one bud can be rehung.

DEEP SOUTH

This is an alien land to me—these fields
So turbulently red, and branches stark
Despite their Spanish moss, this marsh that yields
No fruit, these men with faces strange and dark.

Here where the shacks lean desolate and bleak,
And vultures feed, and lakes grow inky from
The cypress roots, I breathe a South still weak
With fear, and wish that I had never come.

ROAD GANGS

(North Carolina)

"Go slow—men working," says the red-flagged sign,
And we stand on the brakes and crane our heads
To see the steam shovels, laborers and line
Of trucks that should be there to make road-beds.

Turning the corner we surprise a man
Ambling across the road into the shade,
And see another who works by leaning on
The staff of life and laziness—his spade.

MORGENLIED

By Allen E. Woodall

The night is fled, day come again;
And the moths are dead on the window pane.
Dusty brown, and silver grey,
Who are so true to the night as they?
Out of the mouth of the night they came
With hearts aglow for the yellow flame . . .
The night is fled, day come again,
And the moths are dead on the window pane.

A LITTLE SONG

By Ruby Hudson

Life is a little song
  Between two silences,
  That goes crying for these;

The love that could not be,
  And the love that might have been;
  And then grows still again.

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